

PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED IN A
MULTIFAITH WORLD

By

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ABSTRACT

PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED IN A MULTIFAITH WORLD

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This Doctor of Ministry Project addresses the need to Prepare High School Students to be Educated in a Multifaith World. The rationale for this initiative is predicated upon the need for Christian youth to be able to interact and dialogue with other faith community members in the world of work and at institutions of higher learning. This necessitated the selection of a site, a site team, a training team and a primary focus group. St. Johns Baptist Church of West Hempstead was the site used for the undertaking of this project. The site team was a cross section of pastors, ministers, educators, white collar professional members and non- members of St. Johns Baptist Church. Five lay persons and an ordained minister was selected and trained who worked with the candidate in preparing the primary focus group to be educated in a multifaith world.

Current literature on multifaith dialogue and interaction was researched and presented within the framework of theological, biblical and social science foundations. The church membership was exposed to and interacted with other faith communities with particular emphasis on preparing the youth to be educated in a multifaith world.

The value of such a program is translated in terms of a more prepared youth to be educated in a multifaith world; enhancing their opportunities of success in institutions of higher education and the world of work.

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INTRODUCTION

PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED IN A MULTIFAITH WORLD

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelist; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:11-14).¹

In this Epistle of Paul, the Apostle to the Ephesians, reference is made of divine offices given to chosen men and women by God. The primary purpose of those offices was to prepare Christians for ministry and to solidify the body of Christ. Although Paul mentions the offices of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers my focus is on the office of the Pastor and Teacher. As senior pastor of St. Johns Baptist Church, I Am convinced that pastors from the Christian community are charged with the awesome responsibility of teaching believers of all ages biblical principles, polity and precepts. As the Pastor/Teacher embraces these challenges and this awesome responsibility, there must be a philosophical consciousness to purpose. The teaching must be designed to build a strong solid Christian foundation. The implication “the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness” (Ephesians 4:14) used by Paul is a warning to the Christian community of the existence of people with deviant behavior or misguided intentions. There is an inherent danger of falling prey to those perpetrators of dishonorable

¹ All Biblical references from KJV Holy Bible.

intentions when the Christian community fails to properly teach its members. The Christian pastor/teacher responsibility is perfecting the saints toward a Christ like maturity. According to Dr. Beresford Adams “our lives should blend so much with the will of God that it becomes clear to others that we belong to God.”² It’s my premise that when the Christian community works to build a strong solid Christian foundation within the youth population, then interacting and dialoguing with other faith communities is necessary.

Kate McCarty contends that Americans are simultaneously passionate and ignorant about religion. According to McCarty in a 2006 study of the religious lives of American teenagers, 82 percent affiliated with a local congregation and 71 percent feeling close to God, did not have a clue about religion or God. Their beliefs about the religions of others were almost nonexistent.³ This data is indicative of the Christian communities’ failure to build a solid biblical foundation which is necessary for genuine dialogue. The news media reminds us daily that we live in a world populated with people categorized as excellent, good, bad, ugly and indifferent. In all walks of life members of the Christian community are compelled to interact and dialogue with members of other faiths.

Improper preparation negates needed confidence and substance needed to engage others in the World of Work and Institutions of Higher Learning. This project was conceived out of my concern that the Pastor/Teacher was not properly preparing Christian high school students to adequately move to the level needed to interact and

² Beresford Adams, *Principles of Belief and Practices of Faith: A guide to Successful Living* (Coram, New York: Bee and Gee Publishers, LLC, 2005), 95.

³ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters In America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 10.

dialogue with people from other faith communities. If those charged with the responsibility of teaching the Christians fail to do so, the youth would become a generation “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” as mentioned by Paul. (Ephesians 4:14)

I entered the world of work at a very young age. At the age of 10, I accepted my first paper route. By the age of 12, I was selling ice cream from a small push cart during the summer after I finished my paper route. After graduating from Fairfield Industrial High School in 1960, I erroneously decided to enter the world of work and not attend college. I now know that this decision was based on three illogical reasons. First and foremost the decision was born out of ignorance; Second, I wanted to punish my father for being a formidable disciplinarian; Third, I convinced myself, that the fastest way to get rich was to enter the world of work. Unfortunately, there are presently too many youth traveling the same road, making the same erroneous decisions for the same reasons. At age 21 my supervisor at Beth Israel Hospital in Manhattan encouraged me to attend college. I received a certification in hospital administration from New York City College. I was sworn in as a New York City Police Officer at the age of 26. In 1989 at the age of 46, I retired from the Police Department and accepted a position as a Guidance Counselor at Hempstead high school. In 1987 I accepted the position of senior pastor at St. Johns Baptist Church in Lakeview. Although my employment history required dialoging and interacting with people of all nationalities and religions, it was only as a senior pastor that, I recognized the importance of other faith communities. As a child reared in Birmingham, Alabama, I was aware of the presence of Jews and Muslims. Christians were the obvious majority, but Jews and Muslim were also important members

of our local society. Bahia, Jain, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Hindu or Wiccan, were a few of the multitude of faith communities. They are all recognized religions but seldom ever mentioned in Alabama during my formative years. I felt like Jacob who was awakened out of his sleep to realize the Lord was in the place and he knew it not (Genesis 28:16). God was there all along, but Jacob failed to grasp the essence of His presence. Throughout, my life the multiplicity of faith communities was present and I knew it not. With this enlarged horizon of the multitude of faith communities, came recognition of a paradigm shift of global interfaith. The core of this paradigm shift is change. Change brings an unavoidable problematic variable. There are those who embrace change and those who resist change. All things considered, the position one takes most often depends on the effect change has on them, their family, their community, their world, and yes their faith community.

The primary focus of this work is to encourage those who are instrumental in the education of Christian youth that these youth become global productive citizens who embrace a multifaith world. This project is not designed to analyze the pros or cons of racism. However, because of the nature of our society there will be occasional references to racial issues. Various forms of discrimination have long interfered with minorities and women efforts to compete in the main stream of society. The upward mobility of members of various faith communities has been negatively affected by discrimination, which often includes religious profiling. The global Multifaith shift I reference should be embraced as an opportunity to forge upward, and overcome yet another barrier that might hinder the multifaith education of our Christian youth.

In 1996, the valedictorian of Hempstead High School, in the predominately Black School District, was informed by her guidance counselor and assistant principal that she should consider attending a Historical Black College (HBC). As a friend of the family, guidance counselor and the student's pastor I was concerned with that decision. When asked for an explanation, I was informed that she was well qualified academically, but socially unprepared. Although she considered most major universities, she chose to attend a HBC. After spending countless hours with this student, I concluded that her decision was finalized primarily because of two reasons. First, she valued the input or advice of those she respected, namely the guidance counselor and the assistant principal. Those were two people she held in high esteem. Second, she was uncomfortable interacting and dialoging with youth from other faith communities who were well represented at most major universities. Her Christian community who share the responsibility of preparing the youth to dialogue and interact with members of other faiths in higher education and the world of work had failed. It was an honor to be the pastor of St. Johns Baptist Church, and a double honor to be the pastor of the valedictorian of a major high school on Long Island. She was obviously an excellent student in school; however her biblical foundation was weak. This young lady attended church every Sunday, but was seldom in Sunday School or mid-week bible study. Sunday School and mid-week bible study is designed primarily, in most Christian communities (particularly in St. Johns Baptist Church) to develop the Christian believer to Christ like maturity in a multifaith environment. It is my contention that the church should be the institution to emphasize the importance of their faith community. As the members mature in their faith traditions they learn to appreciate and respect other faith

communities. Dr. Patricia J. Rickenbacker challenges the church to “embrace its mission and take the collaborative lead to unite the church, school, parents and community to work in conjunction with one another toward the holistic education of its children.”⁴

Attending a HBC is obviously a major accomplishment. However the possibility of interacting and dialoguing with members of other faith communities at many if not all of the Historical Black Colleges is small. Fear or the inability to interact with members of other faith communities should not be a contributing factor in decisions to attend or not to attend any university. Carter Godwin Woodson contends that education with a loss of vision “learns to follow the line of least resistance rather than battle against odds for what real history has shown to be the right course.”⁵ As an alumnus of “the Black Fairfield Industrial School District” At Fairfield Alabama, I clearly understand and support the Woodson argument. Although this project will not focus on segregation, I pause here to mention two contributing factors. First, segregation or exclusion that prevented Black Americans from the main stream has been wounded but not destroyed. African Americans have made tremendous strides globally in religion business, politics and academically, yet there is room for improvement. Dr. Lee H. Walker in citing a study conducted by the Manhattan Institute in 2005, revealed that public schools had a 71 percent graduating rate overall. The study also revealed that only 56 percent of Blacks (including men and women) and 52 percent Latinos graduated from public high school. Walker continues, according to the Urban Institute, to report that 56 percent of Black

⁴ Patricia Rickenbacker, “Church, School, Parents, and Community In Collaboration To Improve Academic Performance In ‘At Risk’ Students Through Character Education” (D.Min. diss., United Theological Seminary, 2001), 74.

⁵ Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis – Education Of The Negro – An African - American Classic* (USA: Clear Words.org, 2009), 96.

females but only 43 percent of Black males graduated.⁶ If the educational institutions continue to “Mis-Educate” minorities we will ultimately fail a generation. I foresee the circle of “Mis-Educating” African Americans not only continuing, but getting larger “as we keep doing what we did we will continue to get what we got” and fail to correct an erroneous system. Walker advocates agitation of the Black community to take action even action in the street in order to pursue “educational freedom.”⁷ Excellent education from kindergarten that continues in elementary and secondary grades will build the foundation necessary for all students to compete for the seats at major universities. The Christian community must vigorously promote the concept of educating the whole person.

The Black Fairfield Industrial School District of the past, (there is only one Fairfield Industrial District post desegregation in Alabama), was the recipient of hand me down school books and other dated materials. The district functioned to sustain and maintain the status quo of segregation and exclusion. Vision was not promoted in the Black Fairfield School District. “A mind that remains in the present atmosphere never undergoes sufficient development to experience what is commonly known as thinking.”⁸ As we embrace this 21st Century the Christian community must recognize the global multifaith shift. Obviously with any paradigm shift there are challenges. When the valedictorian of an institution is not prepared for social challenges the Christian community should take a serious look at their contribution. Allow me to reemphasize, the institution stated the reason the student should consider attending a HBC is because

⁶ Lee H. Walker, *Rediscovering Black Conservatism* (Chicago: The Heartland Institute, 2009), 35.

⁷ Ibid. 50.

⁸ Carter Goodwin Woodson,, 77.

she was not socially prepared. The school does not get a pass on this indictment. On the contrary, they share equally with the home and faith community (if there are any). I join with Dr. Rickenbacker in challenging the church to united those institutions responsible for the maturity of Christian youth. The possibilities and potentials of a school valedictorian should carry a high ceiling. Segregation is a form of exclusion, and a global destructive entity. Segregation will periodically show itself to hinder progress. Second, a lack of vision in a school district is detrimental to the district and the student population. Every administration should produce a viable plan that will provide a quality education in a safe environment for every child. Failure to maximize students' potentials is not an acceptable option.

In the Christian community we know that “Where there is no vision, the people Perish” (Proverbs 29:18). As I interact globally within the Christian community, I have concluded that a large percent of Christian churches are not prepared to embrace this present day paradigm shift to a multifaith world. This project is designed to raise the consciousness of the Christian community of the need to prepare youth to interact and dialogue with youth from other faith communities at all institutions of higher learning.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

For 21 years as pastor of St. Johns Baptist Church in West Hempstead, New York, preparing Christian youth for higher education has been my top priority. However, evaluation has revealed that my preparation failed to address the recent population shift to multifaith at institutions of higher learning. This demonstration project will prepare St. John's High School students to dialogue and interact with students of other faith communities at the college level.

CHAPTER 1 HISTORY OF SETTING

The St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview, West Hempstead, New York was born out of prayer in the home of one of the founding members in 1925. After many prayers and deliberation, it was resolved that a Baptist Church should be organized in the hamlet of Lakeview Long Island. A meeting was called of all interested parties in 1926, with a resident minister presiding. Leading members and officers of Shiloh Baptist Church of Rockville Centre, New York were asked to sit in at the meeting. The church records place 14 people in attendance, who became the founding members. These pioneers, literally, built the church and called their first pastor.

The original building was built at the corner of Saranac Road and Chautauqua Avenue. This plot was donated by one of the founding families. The church, then located at 2 Saranac Road, was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York on July 5, 1927. The church's name was suggested by two of the founders and approved by the body. For over fifty years, the church moved forward experiencing growing pains of a new church. During this period of time, thirteen preachers served as pastor of St. Johns Baptist Church of West Hempstead, New York.

Notably, during those years, there were individuals who came from the neighboring churches of Shiloh and St. Paul A. M. E. to lend their support to the fledgling St. Johns Baptist Church. Among them was a deacon, who was later ordained and

became pastor. A member of Shiloh Baptist Church volunteered to be superintendent of Sunday School.

In the late sixties and early seventies, it became apparent that the little Cottage type church with a capacity of 100 adults was no longer adequate to facilitate the congregation and its activities. A building fund was established. In 1978, this effort culminated in the breaking of ground, for the present edifice at 632 Chautauqua Avenue. In 1983, as progress continued on the completion of the main sanctuary, we “turned the key” and began worshipping on the lower level. On Easter Sunday 1985, St. Johns Baptist Church held its first worship service in the present sanctuary. While the cornerstone was laid in the original edifice at 2 Saranac Road on November 27, 1955, the present edifice’s cornerstone dedication was held on November 6, 1994 under the present pastor.

The church was without a pastor from 1983 until September of 1987. In September of 1987, I was called as St. Johns senior pastor. When I accepted the position as pastor, a number of problems surfaced. There were parishioners who had assumed the position as “pastors” they were unauthorized. They had no intention of relinquishing their assumed authority. An appointed spokesperson of this group requested and was granted a private meeting. At this particular meeting the person informed me that I only needed to preach when necessary and return home. The unsanctioned pastors would provide the leadership for the church. The educational department of St. Johns for example, was operating as a separate church with their own appointed pastor. This particular group separated themselves from St. Johns Baptist Church in January of 1988. In addition while erecting the new edifice, the church had accumulated serious debt. As a

Christian within the faith community, I immediately instructed the church to join me in seeking direction and wisdom from God through prayer. By the grace of God our financial obligations were satisfied, and our mortgage burned. Our church has continued to grow spiritually and physically.

Now in the twenty- third year of the marriage of St. Johns and me, this ministry has ordained one and licensed twelve ministers to preach and teach the Gospel. Seven of the ministers are presently assisting me at the church. St. Johns has also created and implemented the following ministries: youth, music, dance, outreach, people helping people (people with an addition or special need), willing workers, daughters of Zion (young women ages 19-30), diamond (senior citizens), block (this ministry informs the community of church activities), women, men, ushers, floral, deacon and deaconess, missionary, Bible study, Christian education, Sunday School and many others.

St. Johns Baptist Church is very active in the local community, Eastern Baptist Association, Empire State Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention. Every Sunday morning, St. Johns opens its doors at 9am to members and non-members for individual private prayer and meditation. At 9:30am, Sunday School begins. Morning worship begins at 11am. The doors of St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview have been open every Sunday morning for 22 years regardless of inclement weather or the vicissitudes of life. As a family, St. Johns promotes spiritual, physical and mental growth. As a body of believers in Jesus Christ, we emphasize faith, love, patience and understanding for ourselves and others, with no respect of person. Our music is rich in spiritual hymns, and anthems (both traditional and conventional). Our voices are accompanied by a Hammond organ and percussions. Worship and praise are exuberant

and rhythmical. Every Wednesday from 7 – 8pm is adult midweek service, 7:30 to 9pm is separate youth exploration and 8 to 9pm is Bible study. The youth exploration is a mixture of bible study and relevant youth challenges. All teaching and preaching are solely Bible based.

HISTORY OF THE LOCATION

St. Johns Baptist Church is located in Lakeview (Long Island), New York. Long Island is emphasized, because there is a Lakeview upstate New York. Prior to the 19th Century, there was no lake to view, it was instead covered with swamps and streams that fed Mill River. In the mid-19th century William Oliver, Long Island's largest gristmill created a body of water. The mill was removed in 1873 to build a reservoir for the city of Brooklyn; this venture failed but left Hempstead Lake behind. The area was named Skodic, for a farmer, and then more formally was called Woodfield. Later names were Norwood and Hempstead Gardens, but in 1910 the Long Island Railroad established a Lakeview station and as often happened, the railroad's choice stuck.

In the 1960 Lakeview became a mostly black community. In 1968 the only school in Lakeview (Woodfield Road Elementary School, the present Public Library) was closed to ensure all elementary schools remained racially integrated. Lakeview was the home of the Nineteenth Century boxing champion, John L. Sullivan and 1996 Olympic gold-medal hurdler Derrick Adkins; as a momentum a street has been named in honor of Derrick Adkins.⁹

Lakeview is an unincorporated village in the town of West Hempstead. According to a 2005 New York detailed profile, Lakeview is considered by the residents,

⁹ Raymond A. Jansen, "Home Town Long Island," *Newsday*, 1999, 21.

as the ideal community to raise a family. It is comprised of an estimated median household income of \$76,300.00, and the median house/condo value is estimated at \$346,200.00. The races in Lakeview are Black 84.9%, Hispanic 6.9%, White Non-Hispanic 5.2%, two or more races 3.9%, other race 3.4%, American Indian 1.3% (total can be greater than 100% because Hispanics could be counted in other races). For population 25 years and over in Lakeview the educational profile is high school or higher 83.3%, bachelor's degree or higher 25.5%, graduate or professional degree 11.7%, and unemployed 8.4%. The percentage of household's family is 84.4% with an average household size as 3.6 people. There are an estimated 5.0% of households with unmarried partners in Lakeview.¹⁰

There are 12 registered Christian churches in the neighborhood. Lakeview is surrounded by Rockville Centre, Malverne, Lynbrook, West Hempstead, and Hempstead. West Hempstead is a multi-cultural four- square mile unincorporated area in the town of Hempstead of Nassau County. West Hempstead is populated by 77.4% White Non-Hispanic, 9.9% Hispanic, 5.9% Black, 3.2% other race, 2.9% Two or more races, 2.0% Asian Indian, 1.2% Chinese, 0.9% Filipino, 0.5% Other Asian. (Total can be greater than 100% because Hispanics could be counted in other races) Nassau County has a population of 96.6% White (Irish 31.1%, German 22.5%, French 10.8%, and Polish 6.5%), two or more races 1.3%, American Indians 1.1%, Black 0.9%, and Hispanic 0.9%.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Lakeview-New-York.htm>.

¹¹ Ibid., Nassau.

In 1999 Nassau County celebrated its 100th anniversary; its colonial roots reach more than three centuries. In 1640 a small English band from Massachusetts landed on the North Shore only to be driven off by the Dutch, who claimed territory as far East as Oyster Bay. The English went east to settle in Southampton. Three years later, John Carman and Robert Fordham negotiated with the Indians for a deed to a 10-mile-wide swath from Long Island Sound to the Atlantic Ocean and founded the first English settlement on the Hempstead Plains. The Dutch seeking to control the Indians, negotiated with the Englishmen which resulted in colonizing Oyster Bay, Westbury, Jericho and Hicksville by 1653. In 1664 The Englishmen drove out the Dutch. Nassau County came into being on January 1, 1899; the name honored the late 17th-Century King William III, who came from the Dutch House of Nassau. On July 13, 1900, then-New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt of Oyster Bay laid the cornerstone for the first Nassau County Courthouse on land purchased in 1869 by Alexander T. Steward, founder of Garden City.¹² As we consider the small percent of people of color in Nassau County, if they are to be productive locally, nationally or globally it is imperative that they be prepared to interact with other people, regardless of their faith community. Most major faith communities can be found in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. It is important that teaching at St. Johns include preparing youth to function in a multifaith world.

¹² “Home Town Long Island.”

Limitation

This project will focus primarily on Christians dialoging and interacting with Jews, Muslims and Buddhist.

The setting is an African American Baptist Church, comprised of 99% African Americans

Definitions

Fairfield Industrial Black School District	An inferior Black school district
Life Manual	The Holy Bible
Black Baptist Church	Baptist Church comprised of 90% of African Americans
Halacha	The “way” in the Judaism
Christian Ethics	That which is morally right and wrong for Christians based on the word of God
Holding Pen	A secure area designed to hold prisoners until they are presented to court
Cops for Christ	A ministry for law enforcement
Other	Faith communities and individuals who are not members of the Christian Community
Gigantic	Monumental abnormal occurrence within the ministry
Religious Socialization	Diverse faith communities sharing information

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL/POLITICAL

Although Christianity is still the predominant faith in institutions of higher learning, there has been a paradigm shift to multifaith. This shift has had a major impact on institutions of higher learning and on society at large. Kate McCarthy attributes a major cause of this multifaith shift to the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 which removed the ban on Asian immigration. McCarthy also places emphasis on the Immigration and Citizenship Act of 1965, which abolished the immigration quota system. The Hindu and Buddhist populations had record growth in the decades that followed, and Islam followers more than doubled from 1990 to 2001.¹³ Based on McCarthy's report, students from the Christian community can expect to encounter a multitude of diverse faith members in the world of work and at institutions of higher learning. They should be able engage in meaningful dialogue with members of other faith communities.

St. Johns had the privilege of having a Muslim Interfaith Minister as a guest lecturer in December 2007. The invitation was the result of my passion as senior pastor to expose the St. Johns Baptist congregation to other faith communities. This invitation was extended after much prayer, and preparing the congregation to be receptive and welcoming to a person from another faith community. This service, being in God's will and coupled with the people's trust in their leader, enabled this dynamic speaker to

⁵ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters In America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 6-7.

capture and hold the attention of the congregation. At the conclusion of the lecture, youth and adult members engaged in an informal conversation with our Muslim guest and her husband in the lower sanctuary. The members of St. Johns prepared a meal for our Muslim guest and a visiting Baptist congregation from Brooklyn, New York. The pastor and wife of the visiting church shared the table with our Muslim guest, her husband, my wife and me. After a brief introduction, the visiting pastor and his wife were invited to join in the dialogue.

Conclusion

Based on this service and countless hours of dialogue, observation and interaction with the youth of St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview, I have concluded that they are not adequately prepared to engage in meaningful dialogue with students of different faiths. I identified 10 high school students as a focus group to prepare to dialogue and interact with youth of other faith communities.

In retrospect, when I assumed the pastorate in September of 1987, I discovered that the youth of the church were relegated to what appeared to be second class citizens. Youth limited participation in church was only on the fifth Sunday. Even more alarming was the fact that the teaching was largely irrelevant and outdated. I am honored to have been selected to teach in the National Baptist Convention USA Inc., the Empire State Convention, and the Eastern Baptist Association. I am also a member of several fellowships, two of which are ecumenical. I have concluded, after participating, observing and teaching in countless ministries, that St. Johns Baptist Church is not unique in encountering youth problems within the teaching ministries. Even though many Christian Churches differ there is an obvious need to take a serious look at youth

Christian Education. In an effort to address this problem, I began preaching and teaching about the importance of youth participation and from September 1987 to January of 1988 this was a top priority. In January 1988, a church split resulted in 70% of the youth leaving the church along with their parents. This exit reduced the youth choir from 40 members to 9. The remaining members joined me in fasting and praying for God to rebuild the church. God honored our prayers and faithfulness by showing favor to the congregation. By the Grace of God, a number of families began to join the church. In June of 1988, the youth choir celebrated their anniversary with 45 members. In February of 1988, with the blessings of congregations, I changed the Youth Sunday, from every 5th Sunday to every 3rd Sunday. On Youth Sunday, all students in the church were encouraged to strive for excellence in their secular school. Youths are openly recognized and rewarded for maintaining excellent grades, honor roll, and high honor roll status. We also established a tutorial program in reading math and science. Professionals in reading, math, and science, who were members and non-members of St. Johns, volunteered to tutor participants.

St. Johns has had a strong youth ministry for the past 22 years. The emphasis I placed on youth was not without opposition. As senior pastor, my staff and I, when interacting with the youth, operated from the position that we are compelled to be instrumental in the religious education of Disciples of Christ as well as preparing productive citizens in the world in which we live. Our primary foundation is The King James Version of the Bible. We focused on “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is Profitable for doctrine, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”(2nd Timothy 3:16-17) As a

member of the Christian community, I am resolved that the Bible is the inspired word of God and an excellent text. As a candidate in the Doctor of Ministry program at New York Theological Seminary, the Bible is obviously one of many texts to consider, particularly in a multifaith world.

Emphasis is placed on the youth every Sunday during worship at St. Johns Baptist Church. We have established a youth church, which is a work in progress. At a given time, with the exception of the 3rd Sunday, the youth ministers escort the youth between ages of 4 to 18 to the lower sanctuary to conduct youth worship. Once in the lower sanctuary the youth are separated by gender and age. The 3rd Sunday of each month the youth are encouraged to serve as lay leaders; the objective is to involve the youth while systematically training them to compete in school and the world. Biblically, the Christian community is compelled to “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. (Proverbs 22:6) Every Wednesday, for the past 10 years, the Youth Ministers meets at the church with the youth for the purpose of teaching and ministering to the youth regarding current events, youth concerns and the arts. The youth ministry of St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview promotes an open door policy to all youth in the community. There is a conscious effort to engage the youth in honest and open dialogue. For the past 15 years the Youth Ministry of St. Johns has taken the youth on a 3 day retreat to engage and teach about current life issues and youth concerns. Over the past 2 years, during retreats and weekly dialogue, it became apparent that St. Johns youth demonstrated a lack of appreciation for and knowledge about other faith communities. The teaching had not adjusted to the paradigm shift of multifaith.

For the past 8 years the youth ministry has conducted a Basketball Tournament that hosted as many as 22 teams. Participants' ages ranged from 6 years old to unlimited age with special emphasis on the teens. Prior to the tournament (the first Saturday of August), an open invitation goes out to everyone regardless of their faith. The day of the tournament always begins with Christian prayers which conclude in the Name of Jesus. While speaking to his disciples, Jesus informed them that whatsoever they ask in his name, he would do, and "that the Father may be glorified in the Son". Jesus continued by emphasizing that, if they asked anything in His name, He would do it. (John 14:13-14) There were never any intention of offending or disrespecting any other faith. The prayer was purposed for the guidance and protection of all participants. The invitation and intent was inclusive, but in retrospect the prayers were exclusive. On August 1st, 2009, I made a conscious effort to ascertain the participation of all faith communities present prior to prayer. At the time of my inquiry, all of the participants were Christians. The Christian community plays a major role in the lives of the youth we serve. It is obviously incumbent upon the Christian community to prepare Christian youth to live in a multifaith world or to simply function on a basketball court with people from other faiths. If it is in fact the intent of the invitation to be inclusive, I believe there should be a conscious effort to respect and appreciate all participants and spectators.

"Participating Faith Communities"

Having read the "Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders", To Pope Benedict XVI and thirty-two other Religious leaders, I was torn between love of God and Neighbor, and the Muslim's obedience to their faith. However, the letter might serve as a starting point for multifaith ministry. I am not convinced that those outside of the

Christian or Muslim community can visualize the affirmation of faith that should be present on the inside. The article illuminates two basic principles of love of God and love of neighbor shared by Christians and Muslims. I was initially impressed by the article, although I do have some major concerns and questions regarding the Muslims reference of the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Christians worship a triune God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The article emphasizes the Muslim God as one God that has no associates, more than once. Even if I could forge pass this issue, (which is highly possible), my greatest concern is the affirmation of faith within the Christian and Muslim community. I am not questioning the Commandments, on the contrary, I agree in part with the Muslims' use of scripture, particularly "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with thy entire mind, and with all strength, this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."(Mark 12:30-31) Obedience to scripture has always been a struggle within the Muslim and Christian community.

Obedience to Scripture

Obedience to scripture requires the Christian Community, to love God and our brother. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment has we from him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also."(1st John 4:20-21) The Muslims cite similar demands: "Love of the neighbour is an essential and integral part of faith in God because in Islam without love of the neighbour there is

no true faith in God and no righteousness.” (Assign Open Letter Pg. 11) The model of or these commandments for a cohesive religious body coming together in a common cause (Multifaith) certainly exists. There needs to be a uniform resolve among Muslims and Christians to support and promote their existing mandates of love.

It is my contention that such act of faith would enhance their affirmation and thereby strength the process of serious multifaith and interaction. Christians cannot be fighting Christians and Muslims fighting Muslims, while factions of the disunited members assemble together to solve the world’s problems. At the risk of being redundant, Christians and Muslims submissive and obedient to the discipline of their faith will certainly enhance the potential for world peace. The core foundation of multifaith should be obedience to one’s faith. The Jewish commitment and obedience to their faith and traditions are mentioned throughout the Bible. During Jesus’ dialogue with the woman of Canaan He emphasized the importance of the Jewish community by stating “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel.”(Matthew 15:24)

Abraham Joshua Heschel has been instrumental in assisting the Christian community understand, or at least get a glimpse of the plight of the Jewish Diaspora in “No Religion is an Island.” I was spellbound while reading “No Religion Is an Island”. As I plunged into his work, it became quite obvious that the texture of the book was woven with Heschel’s passion for life, humanity and the possibility of a multifaith movement. Heschel’s passion for life was even echoed in the testimony of his pilgrimage. As he presented excerpts of his extraordinary life, Heschel aligned it with scripture for the purpose of authenticity. In essence, Heschel was “plucked from the fire

of an altar of Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated.”¹⁴ Heschel masterfully captures the reader’s attention while simultaneously raising their consciousness to the fact that “Nazism resolved that it must both exterminate the Jews and eliminate Christianity, and bring about instead a revival of Teutonic paganism”.¹⁵

Common Thread

Heschel challenges both Jew and Christian communities to a realization that they are woven together in origin and collectively share the intellectual, moral and spiritual events within their society¹⁶ Heschel does not, by any stress of the imagination, attempt to placate the reader; he challenge all faith communities to seriously consider the similarities, the differences, and dogmatism of the Jewish and Christian communities. The mere fact that there are vast areas of similarities is indicative of the possibility that there is hope and fertile grounds for interfaith ministry. “We disagree in law and creed, in commitments which lie at the very heart of our religious existence.” Christians and Jews are resolved that “being accountable to God, objects of God’s concern and precious in His eyes,” unites us.¹⁷ As Heschel systematically challenges the reader, he also offers the following scripture for consideration to authenticate his work; “And He said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith”(Deuteronomy 32:20). “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (Psalm 119:63).

¹⁴ Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, *No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

Heschel's contention is that, "The first and most important prerequisite of interfaith is faith. Interfaith must come out of depth not out of a void absence of faith. It is not an enterprise for those who are half-learned or spiritually immature."¹⁸ There appears to be a shift in Heschel's discourse. Heschel began to illuminate such strong statements as "A Christian ought to realize that a world without Israel will be a world without the God of Israel...Judaism is the mother of the Christian faith."¹⁹ Note that Heschel's scripture reference is primarily Old Testament. I found the concept of the "mature person of faith" most intriguing. I agree with and support the theory that the foundational base of a person of faith should be secure before one build on it or co-mingle. It is my contention, as a member of the Christian community and a student of the Holy Bible, that obedience and submission to ones faith is evidence of spiritual maturity. Members of the Christian community know "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."(Hebrews 11:6)

Heschel's magnificent scholarly implication could be construed as preparation for a destined paradigm shift to a multifaith world. Heschel actually appeals to the consciousness of the reader to consider the possibility that "diversity of religion is the will of God."²⁰ In order to bolster his argument, he calls our attention to the story of the building of the tower of Babel. In this particular story, all the people spoke one language. They all assembled with a common cause; they purposed in their heart to build a city and

¹⁸ Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, *No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 7-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

²⁰ Ibid., 10.

a tower that would reach from earth to heaven. The Lord obviously disagreed and caused the scattering of the participants all over the earth. This act of God resulted in the discontinuation of building the tower. “Therefore is the name of it called Ba’bel; because the Lord did confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth.”(Genesis 11:4-9)

On a recent visit to Hofstra University, a local college in Hempstead, New York, it became apparent that members of the Christian community could possible interact and dialogue with members of Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Islam, Zoroastrian, Bahai, or Jain faith communities. Hofstra University life, like most major universities, is a microcosm of the world we live in. Students who can dialogue and interact with students of other faith communities at college will experience global success. The General Reference Center Gold, in a 2000 Newsweek article whose title is “Searching for a Holy Spirit”, talks about young people being openly passionate about their religion. “In place of strict adherence to doctrine many teens embrace a spirit of eclecticism and a suspicion of absolute truths.” In a 1999 poll of teenagers by the religious researcher George Barna, more than half agreed with the statement “All religious faiths teach equally valid truths”. “Where explorers of the baby boom tried on Zen today, Methodism tomorrow, teens might Cobble together bits of several faiths: a little Buddhist meditation or Roman Catholic ritual, whatever mixture appeals at the time.”²¹ I am compelled to consider two schools of thought. The first appears to be a type of, “if it feels good do it” mentality without loyalty to any particular faith community. The Christian community is mandated by the word of God to be loyal to God. Jesus states “If you love me, keep my

²¹ Leland, J., “Searching For a Holy Spirit,” *Newsweek*, 8 May 2000, 61-63.

commandments.”(John 14:15) “As ye have therefore received Jesus the Lord, so walk in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablish in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”(Colossians 2:6-7) A person without a true faith community loyalty is considered to be wavering, uncommitted even double minded. “A double minded man is unstable in all their ways.”(James 1:8) The second school of thought is that people in general have a tendency to experiment with life impacting factors, particularly youth who are attempting to “find themselves”. My target population will be secure in their individual faith community and better equipped to dialogue and interact with members of other faith communities in a multifaith world.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARECH QUESTIONS

SCRIPTURE: Does the Christian Bible Acknowledge Other Faith Communities?

The Christian community's "Life Manual" (the Holy Bible) emphasizes the importance of teachings in both the Old and New Testament.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of
them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,
and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

In the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, Israel was commanded by God to not only diligently teach the children of God, but to continue to rehearse the will of God continuously. Emphasis was on the fact that true teaching is continuous process. The Christian community is commanded by the risen Jesus Christ to teach all nations particularly the youth. (Matthew 28:20) The Holy Bible authenticates that which is to be taught within the Christian community. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2nd Timothy 3:16-17) Within the Christian community it is resolved that God inspired holy men through various means to pen the bible. It is to be affirmed by Christians as a Life Manual, to lead, guide, direct and protect the members of The Body of Christ.

Traditionally, mainline Protestant denominational churches in the United States have been instrumental in the preparation of the whole person using the Bible as their foundation. The church strives to impact those to whom they minister, to be able to venture beyond

the unavoidable paradigmatic shifts. The religious Jews believe that the Hebrew Bible is national history. It is their argument that the stories in the Hebrew Bible are not necessarily understood as allegorically, but are considered blueprints for living a good life.²² Their Hebrew Bible is in essence a Jewish Life Manual. Martin Sicker argues that the defining factor of the development of Judaic civilization was the covenant between God and Moses. With this historical initiative the Jews were freed from Egyptian slavery- to become the people of God. According to Sicker the Jews servitude to Pharaoh was transferred to servitude to God.²³ The paradigm shift that confronts the religious community could possibly be construed as modernity continuance or even post-modernity. A product of modernity according to Kate McCarthy is when the initiative is “built on the premise of equal dignity of all religious and the value of open exchange”.²⁴ It’s paramount for the Christian to embrace this movement and prepare our youth to be most effective as they engage the other faith communities.

Modernity according to Anthony Giddens, refers to modes of social life or organizations which have a worldwide influence.²⁵ I concur with Giddens in principle, particularly when one factor is the potential global impact on the youth of St. Johns Baptist Church. Higher education is extremely important in life skill preparation. Although the church is not limited to, it plays a major role in preparing the youth for higher education. For example, encouraging the youth to make a presentation before a

²² Barbara A. McGraw and Jo Renee Formicola, *Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously: Spiritual Politics on America’s Sacred Ground* (Texas: Baylor University Press., 2005)32

²³ Ibid., 32.

²⁴ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounter in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press., 2007),18.

²⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1.

crowd of onlookers has a tremendous impact on their ability to engage in public speaking. Teaching them, at a very young age, the importance of exchanging ideas with their peers, and acknowledging and respecting the presence of others is paramount. Considering all the global youth gang violence, teaching youth to value, appreciate and cherish life could enhance their horizon on the quality of life. Encouraging with meaningful incentives to strive for academic excellent will impact their scholarship opportunities for higher education as well as their entry into the world of work. Some Modernist circles, within the reform communities in particular, abandoned all belief in the Davidic Messiah who would miraculously lead Israel back to its ancient land, rebuild the Temple, and preside over the resurrection of the dead. Their contention is the Modern Age adorning as the hoped for Messianic Era in which all peoples would dwell in peace.²⁶ This is not a Jewish norm, like most communities of faith the Jewish body is a compilation of humans with their complexities which includes opposition to inclusion.. The possibility does exist that you will never remove the opposition to interfaith from various faith communities. As the paradigm shift of multifaith is upon us, I argue that “it behooves the Christian community to prepare their youth for interfaith dialogue.”

Throughout this project I will continue to emphasize the global paradigm shift of multifaith. The Modern Movement in the Christian community has even witnessed the “distinctive feature of denominational architecture, softened.”²⁷ The expression of differences among Christian denominations is not as distinguish. Muslim heavy

²⁶ John Corrigan, Frederick M. Denny, Carlos M.N. Eire and Martin S. Jaffee, *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. 1998), 98.

²⁷ Ibid., 394.

populated cities such as Cairo have witnessed a type of inclusion in planning and architecture. “Traditional uses of space are intermixed with modern urban planning”²⁸

Evaluation

The bible clearly acknowledges other faith communities as Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in the Gospel of John. Jesus, a Jew, engaged in dialogue with a Gentile woman of Samaria, in which He made reference to a future day when true worshipers would worship God in Spirit and in truth. The inclusive inference was on the true worshiper regardless of the faith community. John saw in a vision, a heavenly host “of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues” worshipping God on the Isle of Patmos. (Revelation 7:9) Although a faction will continue to consciously, even subconsciously, refuse to embrace change in all faith communities, the future of the youth shall, remain greater than the individual. We, as people of faith, can ill afford to allow our individual idiosyncrasies or our dogmatic theology to derail the whole faith nation. I am convinced, that dialogue is the key, and teaching will release the unlimited potential of a genuine multifaith initiative

Theological

Can the Christian God who Changes not, Assist in the Preparation of Youth to be Educated in a Multifaith World in 2010?

Theologians understand that it is recorded that the “Lord God changes not.”(Malachi 3:6) However, as one study the attributes of God, His love for the world becomes obvious. Jesus’ (the son of God) prayer is those placed in his care “be one.” He

²⁸ Ibid., 405.

prays that their oneness be similar to He and the Father, and that they be actually part of He and the Father' oneness. (John 17:21).

Theology then, for the Christians has, in comparative perspective, played in the church a role such as that played in Islamic history by the shari'ah, the Muslim systematized and ritualized moral law, or by Persian mystical poetry. Any given theological statement or doctrine or system arises first of all as the expression in verbal or conceptual form of someone's religious faith.²⁹

The Christian community embraces a theological faith that a sovereign God, whom they have not seen, is true to the written word. Two of the primary properties of faith are trust and confidence. If God said it, that's it, because "God can not lie." (Titus 1:20) Members of the Christian community are taught to believe in and trust every conceivable word of God as it is written in the Bible. Obviously this is the very reason I personally believe the Bible is the Christian's "Life Manual." Failing to teach our youth is not an option.

Teaching is paramount, in most if not all Christian Communities. In the Christian community we recognize the problems associated with our sin nature. A character flaw that is unacceptable to our sovereign God. A common ground of Buddhist and Christians is that many of our problems stem from sin.³⁰ The ostensible sin nature of humans is a detrimental force that must be eliminated in all faith communities. Sin is not a comfortable topic, however it may be considered as an agenda item of a multifaith dialogue.

²⁹Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief: The Difference Between them* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 18.

³⁰H. M. Vroom, *No Other Gods: Christian Belief in Dialogue with Buddhism Hinduism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 13.

I am resolved that the Christian community must do a better job in unfolding God to our youth. It is my contention that as the youth learn of God, they will appreciate His creation which includes all mankind. I am driven by a passion that as youth get to know God, they will experience a new profound appreciation of themselves as well as those they interact and dialogue with from other faith communities.

Although he was not the son of promise, God informed Abraham that He would, in fact, “make a nation” of Ishmael, “the son of the bondwoman.” (Genesis 21:13) Obviously, the Christian community is not the only community of faith. As Christians, it is mandatory that we respect and support the word of God. On one occasion, Jesus informed his disciples that even though other communities may differ they are not necessarily at odds. John had observed such a community ministering in the name of Jesus which was not of their faith. John, being oblivious of the other, forbade him from ministering in the name of Jesus. (Mark 9:38) In 2010 the Christian community can ill afford to be so exclusive. This is not a world of Christians. On the contrary, the religious diversity is evident globally, particularly in institutions of higher learning. Paul reminds those who would hear, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:28-29) This text highlights Christological inclusion. Irvin and Sunquist contends that “whatever else it may be, Christian identity is rooted in the prophetic promise of salvation found in Israel’s life and faith.”³¹ The very foundation of Christianity was established by the Son of a God who so loved the world, He was not only willing, but did in fact give his only

³¹ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 22.

begotten son for the salvation of whosoever. (John 3:16) Whosoever is a call to all who will adhere to the word of God?

Evaluation

God is inclusive. The Christian Community is Christ centered and must embrace the concept of inclusivity. Our teaching and preaching in the Christian community should recognize other faiths. The Christian's "Life Manual" command all members of the community to "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King." (1st Peter 2:17) By design the Christian community is exclusive. There is however a thread of inclusivity.

Sociological

Does the Christian community of faith have a monopoly on exclusivism or is exclusivism by design, woven in the fabrics of all faith communities?

Countless hours of interaction, research, dialogue and observation, have taught me exclusivism is woven into the fabrics of all faith communities. The fabric of this world is woven with religious diversity. The Christian model is to promote and teach religious socialization. In November of 2008, I traveled to Spain, where I was able to visit several colleges in Barcelona. As a Christian, the need to be able to dialogue with members of other faith communities at those institutions of higher learning was important. Christians, according to Judith A. Berling are gradually becoming aware of the presence and proximity of other faiths. Even though Christians are also beginning to realize that religious diversity and the need for religious socialization is an integral part of

our lives, we cannot appear to be oblivious to the magnitude of these communities in 2010.³²

I agree, in principal, with Bering's assertion, that Christian exclusivism can be a reason for preventing appropriate relationships with our religious neighbors.³³ This problem is prevalent in all communities of faith. Every community is resolved that, their way is the right way, thus, exclusivism. It is my contention that we can remain faithful to our faith community and at the same time dialogue and interact with members of different faiths. History will forever illuminate September 11, 2001 as an indication of how people of different religious communities can help each other. September 11, 2001 was a day that will go down in history when America was attacked by terrorist. The nationally recognized World Trade Center in New York City was destroyed. Thousands of people were killed during this malicious attack. In 2010, 9 years later America is still experiencing the negative after effects of this terrorist attack. Although it took a monumental tragedy, inclusion was possible. People were able to see beyond their preconceived stereotypical mentality and support each other. The masses were also able recognize and appreciate the multitude of gifts and expertise of others regardless of their origins, nationality and individual faith differences. For a brief period America became one.

Evaluation

First and foremost, people make up the communities of faith. The fact that all people have the same basic needs is a tremendous premise for dialogue to begin.

³² Judith A. Berling. *Understanding Other Religious Works: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2004) 11.

³³ Ibid., 12.

Improving the quality of life for all is an excellent starting point to build from. The Faith communities shares a responsibility of preparing our youth to recognize those common threads. Institutions of higher learning are certainly a major entity for preparing youth to meet those needs.

Methodological

Can the Christian community be inclusive, and maintain its Christian Ethics or does inclusion pose a potential threat to their foundation?

For the past 22 years, St. Johns Baptist Church has been a member of a local Ecumenical body. For a number of reasons which does include theological differences, this body which began with 9 participating churches has been reduced to 6. The present 6 participating churches are the following:

2 Baptist Churches:

St. Johns Baptist Church – Rev. William Earl Thomas, Pastor

Calvary Baptist Church – Rev. Curtis Williams, Pastor

1 United Methodist Church:

Good Shepherd – Rev. Sarah Ford, Pastor

1 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

St. Matthew – Dr Monroe T. Turner, Pastor

1 African Methodist Episcopal Church

St. Paul's – Rev. Ellotte Hobbs, Pastor

1 Non-Denominational Church

New Life Ministries - Rev. Katherine Corbett, Pastor

Although all the churches are Christian, they have different methodologies and often differ in theologies. Mutual respect for different religious beliefs is the agreed norm among the participants. We worship as one body during the Christian religious holidays. We would often engage the youth in the worship services during this time.

I have become an active member of the West Hempstead faith community group which includes Protestant, Catholic, Presbyterian, Jewish and Buddhist faiths. The

primary objective of this group has positively impacted the quality of life for all West Hempstead residents. We have had two combined worship services. On August 9, 2009, at 4PM. the first service was hosted at St. Johns Baptist Church of West Hempstead, New York. Rabbi Art Vernon of the Jewish Community Center was the keynote speaker. The service was well attended, with representation from all the participating faith communities. I was honored to conduct the order of service. Reverend Frederick L. McElderry of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church prayed the invitational prayer; the Old Testament scripture was read by Pastor Frank Maniscalco and the New Testament scripture was read by Pastor Raymond Lorthioir of Trinity Lutheran Church. Reverend Hazel G. Thomas gave the official welcome and Vicar Rebecca Pollicino responded on behalf of all in attendance. Doctor T Monroe Turner of St. Matthew AME Zion presented the purpose and introduced the key note speaker. The praise dance team of St. Johns Baptist Church under the direction of Evangelist Shelia Y. Thomas and the Choir under the direction of Evangelist Christine Nichols were superb. It was a tremendous service capped off by a powerful and appropriate sermon by Rabbi Vernon. It was most important that the congregants and observers were able to witness an inclusive service of a diverse group of spiritual leaders in one place on one accord aggressively pursuing a common cause. Youth of St. Johns and the participating faith communities were in attendance. The August 9, 2009 service was the first of many designed to be a blessing and enhance the quality of life for the people we serve. We engaged in serious dialogue at monthly meetings with mutual respect for all participants. The future plans include inviting other faith communities, combined with worship services and youth dialogue.

Judith Berling supports the theory of inclusion, and suggested study groups, programs, conversations, forums where we can engage other religious groups with our youth. Berling cautioned us to be careful not to narrowly approach this initiative of inclusion through Christian lenses.³⁴ I concur with Judith Berling that, it is imperative that real inclusion be sensitive to the persons of other faith communities. In the service on August 9, Rabbi Vernon was at liberty to choose his sermon topic. All participants agreed prior to the service to be sensitive to all faith communities. The sermon, prayers, scriptures and songs of this awesome service was indicative of this agreement. Inclusion presents an opportunity to share and receive information from all participating faith communities. It also allows the Christian community to recognize and affirm the existence of the other faiths. Members of St. Johns are excited to be participants in the religious socialization.

³⁴ Berling, "Understanding Other Religious Works," 113.

CHAPTER 4: WHEN THE CHURCH FAILS TO PREPARE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED IN A MULIFAITH WORLD

Kairos

Kairos is one of the Greek words for time, the other being *Chronos*. According to Paul Tillich, *Chronos* differs in that it is measureable clock time whereas *Kairos* is the qualitative time of the occasion. “*Kairos* is the time which indicates that something has happened which makes an action possible or impossible.”³⁵ In the introduction, I talked about the Hempstead High School 1998 Valedictorian’s chose of attending a Historical Black College (HBC). This should have been her *Kairos* moment. The student had completed high school in three years. The amazing fact is she had taken a number of college courses along with the required Regents courses necessary to receive a New York State Regents diploma. She epitomized the candidate of choice for most, if not all, major universities. That which necessitated a *Kairos* moment was in place. The student’s scholarship was extraordinary. Her academic achievement resulted in being awarded the 1998 Valedictorian. Academically, she would have been accepted by most private and state major colleges. The student chose to attend a HBC. As stated before, the trusted powers did not believe she was socially ready to attend an Ivy League Institution or any major college other than an HBC. In essence, a major high school conceded that their best student was not socially prepared. The church, school and home had denied this

³⁵ Paul Tillich, *A History Of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins To Existentialism* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc. 1968), 1

high school scholar her *Kairos* moment. The church can make a difference by adopting the following:

1. Make a conscious effort to encourage parishioners to prepare their children for life beyond high school.
2. Partner with the schools to engage in dialogue regarding socially preparing students for life beyond high school.
3. Aggressively embrace training necessary to prepare Christian youth to interact and engage in dialogue with youth from other faith communities.

Mandate

“Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, how is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of me, which is a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans”(John 4:9) Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman from his position as the Son of God. She was attempting to comprehend and respond from her position as a Gentile. There obviously was a lack of understanding in the dialogue. The Samaritan woman response was in the 9th verse of the 4th chapter of John’s gospel of the bible. (John 4:9) In the 10th verse however Jesus highlights the disconnection, by articulating that if the woman knew the gift of God, and who it was that spoke to her; she would have asked him for a drink of the living water. (John4:10) This was pre-manifestation of the Christian community as we know it. The day of Pentecost, in which the prophetic utterance of the prophet Joel was fulfilled had not yet materialized. (Acts 2:1-16) This Samaritan woman was not prepared to process the revelation knowledge of Jesus Christ. The theological and philosophical principles of the Christian community were in their embryonic state when the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman took place. God has equipped the Christian community in this 21st century with the necessary skills to prepare members to successfully embrace the world outside of the community.

(Ephesians 4:11-13) The Christian community is also commanded by the resurrected Savior to teach and prepare members with an assurance He would be with them.

(Matthew 28:19-20) When the Christian community fails to prepare their youth to dialogue and interact with youth from other faith communities:

- They are not operating in the will of God.
- They are disobedient to the mandate of God to teach.
- The Christian youth foundation necessary for success becomes weak.
- Christian youth upward mobility in the world of work becomes limited.
- Christian Youth social skills in higher education are incomplete.

Judith A. Berling contends that “the inability of Christians to help parishioners deal with the religious diversity of their lives, their workplaces, and their families has driven people from the churches: it is simpler to be spiritual, but not religious than to wrestle with the complications of maintaining Christian faith in a religiously diverse world”. If the Christian community is to embrace a multifaith world that is apparent in the workplace, schools, and community, Christians must begin to understand and engage other religions as part of their Christian lives and understanding.³⁶

It is documented that one of the primary educational tasks of the Christian and Jewish communities is to equip their members with the skills needed to reclaim their particular tradition, to articulate their unique spiritual identities, and to share that richness with each other and with the world.³⁷ In essence, the faith community to which one belongs is unique and each member should be prepared, or in the process of being prepared, to intelligently represent their spiritual uniqueness. Obviously, there is a world beyond the confines of our individual faith communities. The richness of the Christian

³⁶ Judith A. Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004).

³⁷ David F. Sandmel, Rosann M. Catalano, Christopher M. Leighton, *Irreconcilable Differences?: A Learning Resource for Jews and Christians*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 2001), 7.

community is to be shared with that world. The most common method of sharing or even illuminating the richness of the Christian community is through dialogue and interacting with the world particularly members of other faith communities.

Dialogue

Dr. Dale T. Irving passionately emphasized “dialogue as the key element” to a successful multifaith initiative.³⁸ Interfaith dialogue can no longer be perceived as optional it is a must. As we move forward to embrace this global paradigm shift toward multifaith, participants from diverse faith communities must share a willingness to engage each other. We must collectively be persistent in not allowing our past to determine the direction of our future. Participating faith communities should strive to forget the past, ignore the polemical arguments, and give precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones.³⁹ To embrace meaningful dialogue as a people, we must learn to recognize the complexity of housing a multitude of faith and or religious traditions in one setting. Participants engage in dialogue from their unique location. Dialogue not only affords diverse communities of faith to understand each other, but it also enhances our understanding of our own faith community.⁴⁰ In essence, interfaith dialogue impacts the participant’s relationship with God and other faith communities. It allows us to see ourselves through the eyes of others and this tends to keep us honest.

Participants of relevant dialogue should speak the truth, be open, respectful and receptive. When Christian youth engage the other in dialogue a lasting effect on their

³⁸Dale T. Irving, President, New York Theological Seminary, 2009.

³⁹ Ali Unal, Alphonse Williams. *Advocate of Dialogue* (Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 2000), 244.

⁴⁰ David F. Sandmel, Rosann M. Catalano, Christopher M. Leighton, *Irreconcilable Differences? A Learning Resource for Jews and Christians* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2001), 184-185.

attitude, belief and behavior is certain.⁴¹ This encounter could be detrimental to the unprepared Christian youth. William Isaacs argue that dialogue from the Greek words *dia* and *logos*, is an attempt to reach new understanding and, in doing so, to form a totally new basis from which to think and act. *Dia* means “through”; *logos* is translated as “word,” or “meaning,” so, in essence, dialogue is a flow of meaning or a conversation in which people think together in conversation.⁴² Isaacs concurs, that dialogue not only raises the level of shared thinking, it also impacts how people act, and, in particular, how they act together.⁴³

Through meaningful dialogue we can maintain our equilibrium and learn how to engage our hearts.⁴⁴ The mere fact that true dialogue provides a venue to engage our heart makes the participants vulnerable, particularly the unprepared Christian youth. “Dialogue represents a new frontier for human beings-perhaps the true final frontier. In it we can come to know ourselves and our relatedness to the whole of life.”⁴⁵

Judith Berling insists upon patient and persistence from all participants engaged in the dialogue. All dialogue participants in a learning process should adhere to mutually respect and be cogence of the fact; they are engaged in critical conversation.⁴⁶ From my position as a Pastor, Father, Retired School Guidance Counselor, and Retired New York

⁴¹ Ibid., 185.

⁴² William Isaacs, *A Pioneering Approach To Communicating In Business And In Life: Dialogue And The Art Of Thinking Together*, (New York: Random House, 1999), 19.

⁴³ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁶ Judith A. Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (New York: Orbis Books 2004), 74.

City Police Sergeant, I find that too many youth exemplify a low tolerance for constructive criticism and critical critique. Christian youth must now be properly prepared to be effective in a serious engagement of this nature

Living Epistle

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” 2nd Corinthians 3:2-3)

When Christian youth are properly prepared, the dialogue begins as they approach the setting. The assurance of their being is evident prior to engaging in conversation. The exuberant persona of a child of God ready to engage in genuine dialogue is evident. As Raimon Panikkar eluded to one who consecrates and dedicate their entire existence to something that is really worthy of being called a human cause, to something that claims to be not just a partial and imperfect truth, but a universal and even absolute truth.⁴⁷ This type of demeanor necessitates proper teaching and training to avoid the possible arrogance and condemnation of other faith communities. I agree with Panikkar that this type of attitude carries an obvious danger of intolerance, hybris, and contempt for others. All participants should be able to command respect for their faith community from each other regardless of the initial perception of an intolerable attitude.

Panikkar offers Five Attitudes and Five Models to consider in participating in genuine dialogue.

Attitudes:
Exclusivism
Inclusivism

⁴⁷ Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.

Parallelism
Interpenetration
Pluralism

Models

Geographical:

Physical:

Geometrical:

Anthropological:

Mystical:

The Ways to the Mountain Peak

The Rainbow

The Topological Invariant

Language

Silence

CHAPTER 5: PERSONAL

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak (Jeremiah 1:5-7).

In retrospect, I truly believe I was destined to be in my present location as senior pastor of St. Johns Baptist church in West Hempstead, New York. Like the children of Israel, wondering in the wilderness for forty years on a journey that should have taken only 11 days, (Deuteronomy 1:2) I should have completed this assignment many years prior to this date. I also like the children of Israel did not follow Gods directives. Finally Like the children of Israel, I was too busy complaining about things I had no control of; I failed to recognize the blessings of God. There is no logical explanation for why I am in this location at the age of 67, there is however a divine connection. I truly believe, I am “now” in the will of God, walking in my preordained destiny. As a child, I can recall attempting to explain to my dear mother, an epiphany experience. On a particularly dark night in Fairfield, Alabama there seemed to have been ghostly images all around me. My mother with a smile on her face, simply stated, “The Lord’s angels were protecting me. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psalm 91:11). As a child, I perhaps was just as confused after my mother’s explanation as I was prior to it. The mere fact that mother had spoken, the explanation was readily accepted. We were taught not to question your elders, especially parents. For if one could not trust

their parents who could they trust. My mother was not a biblical scholar nor did she attempt to be one. She would refer to the pastor or bible as her reference and authority. The gospel of John highlights Jesus revealing the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost as the person to teach all things and to bring all things to our remembrance. (John 14:26) Paul Tillich reminds us that the Logos is the real mediator between God and man regarding angels and power.⁴⁸ With the exception of my father, my family attended church every Sunday and many week days. We were members of the First Baptist Church of Fairfield until 1948. First Baptist was, and until this day is one of the larger and affluent churches of Fairfield Alabama. It was there, I was baptized with many of my siblings by the late Rev. Williams. On a number of occasions it was rehearsed in my ear by senior members of First Baptist Church that the Lord had something for me to do or the Lord had his hands on me.

In 1948 my family relocated to Birmingham, Alabama. My mother was a devout Christian, coupled with my father insisting that everyone under their roof go to church a fact that resulted in the family joining a church. We all, with the exception of my father, the late William Earl Thomas Sr., joined The Greater Lily Star Baptist Church. Perhaps because of my father's house rule more than any spiritual reason, I remained a faithful member until 1962. I would again often hear from the senior members and officers of the church that the Lord had something for me to do, or He had his hand on me. As I did not pay very much attention to those words at First Baptist Church of Fairfield, I acknowledged them even less at Greater Lily Star Baptist Church. As a teen, not only had my location changed, but my position had taken on a new meaning,

⁴⁸ Paul Tillich, *A History Of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Origins to Existentialism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 30.

In 1962, at the age of nineteen, I married my high school sweetheart, who I am still with forty-seven years later. We relocated to Brooklyn, New York to enhance our opportunities and quality of life. Leaving my family and my wife's family and the only life I knew to travel to a foreign land (New York) was no small decision. My decision was based on a number of factors. 1962 was an era of change regarding segregation. The paradigm shift that was taking place involved the local, state and federal government. There was violent resistance to change. As a proud young Black man, I was not a good candidate for a non-violent march. Quality of life for African Americans during this era in progressive states like California and New York appeared to be more inviting. Finally, the job opportunities seemed to be greater in New York for a young African Americans. The fact is that I was destined to be in this location at this time.

I had a rude awakening on arriving to New York. The anticipated beauty seen on television of the Plaza, or Waldorf Astoria hotels, Manhattan Club, Park Avenue, United Nations, Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Madison Square Garden and the famous department stores was hidden behind graffiti, dilapidated buildings, degenerates, prostitutes, pimps and filthy streets. Clearly New York is the State of opportunity and possibilities it has been good to me and my family; however that is a fact I had to learn to appreciate. As my pilgrimage continued in New York, my wife and I moved into a small kitchenette in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn in July 1962. In 1963 we moved to a larger two bedroom apartment in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. By the grace of God, we purchased our first home in Roosevelt, (Long Island) New York in 1970. We relocated to our present home in December of 1976 in Huntington, New York. I am a grateful father of two daughters and four sons. By the grace of God, they are all healthy

and doing well with their families. All of my children reside in New York except for one daughter who lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

As Israel entered the wilderness, I too entered my wilderness experience in 1962. (Exodus 15:22) The children of Israel left Egypt to go to the promise land of milk and honey; I left Birmingham to travel to Brooklyn, my anticipated home of milk and honey. Israel's journey was ordered by God. (Exodus 3:8) I now believe my journey was ordered by God. I adopted and implemented my father's system of not going to church while insisting that everyone else in the home attend. Admittedly, I did not make a conscious effort to employ a particular system especially one I vehemently disagreed with. As a father of six, I am convinced that my father believed, as I now know, the church augments family values as it also ministers to the whole person. I realize God used the church in preparing me to be the person I am.

I joined the New York City Police Department in February of 1968. I also completed John Jay College, and entered New York University Graduate School. I took the Law School Aptitude test after deciding to pursue a career as a lawyer. I was convinced that becoming a lawyer would be the quickest way to become rich and famous. While attending court, one afternoon which was precipitated by an arrest I made, my attention was drawn to a small secure area that was referred to as a holding pen. The site drew my attention and brought tears to my eyes. It is an understatement to say that the locked area was over crowded with prisoners waiting to see the judge. Even though one could barely move, I noticed an African American male defecating in one corner while others were eating baloney sandwiches on the other side of the room. Moved with compassion, I made a conscious decision to pursue a career that would allow me to help

people prior to their involvement with the law. I enrolled in Hunter College with a major in School Counseling. I had no idea I was under the direction of the divine.

In 1977, God used my oldest son Fredrick (Fred) to invite me to church. From 1962 until that particular Sunday, many people had unsuccessfully invited me to church. I know now, it was time for me to step out of my wilderness. I heard the words “give me a minute”, come from my mouth when my son Fred asked me why he had to go to church and I was staying home? Please understand my home was not a democratic house hold; my bride’s (whom I affectionately refer to after 47 years of marriage) words were law, and my decisions were not to be questioned. Yet I found myself rushing to get dressed to attend church with my family. I now know, it was time to step out of my wilderness and step into the path of my divine destiny. I joined Joshua Baptist Church of Huntington in January 1977. I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior in the summer of 1977. From that moment on, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, I began devoting my life to the work of Christian ministry. By the divine guidance of God, I served in many ministries in Joshua from 1977 until 1987. I served as chairman of the deacon and trustee ministries, Sunday School superintendent, teacher, vice president of the senior choir and assistant to the pastor as a licensed minister to mention a few. God was preparing me for my present location. In 1979, my bride and I organized a prison ministry. Under the power of God many men and women boys and girls had life changing experiences as they accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior under that ministry. In 1979, I joined “Cops for Christ”. Although this was a New York City based ecumenical group with a passion to minister to police officers and local churches, they had a global affect. On a

number of occasions, they were inspired by God to minister abroad and even risked their lives behind the then “Iron Curtin”⁴⁹.

SELF INVENTORY

RELIOUS HISTORY AND TRADITION: My religious history and tradition regarding approaches and interpretation of the Sacred (Religious) Texts of my faith are to believe and trust Jesus Christ. I have had the opportunity to intellectually glean from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, O.M. Kelley Bible Institute, Hampton Ministers Conference, Eastern Baptist Christian Education, Empire Baptist Christian Education, National Baptist Christian Education, and wise men such as Gardner Taylor and Samuel Proctor to mention a few. I am convinced that “every soul should be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” (Romans 13:1) I preach, teach and practice that one should prayerfully approach the Text always leaving room for divine revelation. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

AUTHORITATIVE CRITERIA: The New Hampshire Declaration Of Faith, 1. Of The Scriptures “We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, the truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human

⁴⁹ *The World Book Encyclopedia* , 1959, s.v. “Iron Curtin.”

conduct, creeds and opinions be tried.” (*Baptist Beliefs*: by E. Y. Mullins, D.D., LL.D.) I personally affirm, embrace and promote the word as divine and infallible. As a member of the present day religious community for over thirty years, and privy to live on this earth for sixty-five years the norms or standards are quite clear to me and can be best stated in Proverbs: “So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:4-6) Please considers the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1-2

WORKING THEOLOGY: One should live what they proclaim. The evidence of the Sacred (Religious) Text should be obvious in the life style of the prognosticator. The religious community is a collection of people from all walks of life. All of whom which have had a transformational born again experience. We share or we are connected by Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, however we differ in too many areas. For example: A. Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost or in the name of Jesus, Sprinkle or complete submergence. B. Praise dancing in the church. C. Speaking in tongues. D. Female Ministers. E. Titles (Pastor, Reverend, Elder, Apostles, Prophet, Evangelist, Doctor, Farther, Assistant Pastor and or Co-Pastor.) In my application to graduate or professional school and before a religious body I stated that my working theology is the same as my formal theology.

ETHNICITY: It is my opinion that all individuals are unique as is their ethnic history. I was born in Fairfield Alabama in 1942. Racism and segregation were woven to the

heart of the society. I relocated to New York in 1962 at the age of 19 only to discover that racism and segregation were woven to the heart of this society had not escaped New York. Even though there was an attempt to reduce me to a second class citizen in a racist segregated society, I was taught the value of life, self worth and the importance of respect from the time that I was a young child. The Christian Community, over the past thirty years, has only enhanced my depth of ethnicity. I can almost envision the affliction and sorrows of the people of God as he spoke to Moses. (Exodus 3:7) I am certainly patient with people who have a problem financially supporting ministry. I certainly had serious concern about financial support as a new convert. My ethnic history does influence my approach to the Sacred (Religious) Text but not my interpretation.

GENDER: It is my contention that my gender does not influence my interpretation of the Sacred (Religious) Text. The word of God addresses all issues. When we allow the word of God to, regardless of gender, to provide answers, solutions, and directions it will do so. I prayerfully make a conscious effort not to allow my peers or associates or the religious community to totally influence my approach or interpretation. Paul's letter to the church at Galatians addresses this very issue regarding gender; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) I am aware of the struggles females encounter in the Christian Community, primarily because as a male I can only view their struggles through my eyes. My approach to the Text is influenced because of the sensitivity of the gender issue.

SOCIAL CLASS: The possibility does exist that my social class may influence my approach to the Sacred (Religious) Text. I am aware that there are those who are less

fortunate than I, even in my local church. There are those in my local assembly would walk to church to help their pastor purchase a vehicle. Coupled with this is the fact that I was not always as fortunate as I am presently. I am careful how I approach the Text, particularly as it relates to prosperity. At the risk of being redundant, I embrace the word of God: “For there is no respect of person with God.” (Romans 2:11) For Jesus entered into this world that we may have abundant life. (John 10:10) It is his desire that the Christian Community prosper and be in good health even as their soul prosper. (3rd John 2) The fact is there are those within the Christian Community who are having some financial struggles. As one of ten siblings, living in a two bedroom home, my father was the only provider. His pride prevented him from accepting help from anyone. We never missed a meal, and dressed as well as children from elite families in the community; my father maintained a roof over our heads and a car to travel in.

EDUCATION: My education does influence my approach to, and interpretation of the Sacred (Religious) Text. I am more seeker sensitive, and open to revelation knowledge. For example, the Book of Revelation assists the Body of Christ to have a working knowledge of every potential spirit one may encounter. The focus is on the seven churches which are in Asia they represent the various church culture and types of spirits of today. I have learned to be more receptive and critique more as I continue to enlarge my scholarship.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES: My approach to the Text is very much influenced by the values, welfare and survival needs of the community I service. I am not aware of any influence implicit or otherwise that the community has on my method of interpreting the Text. I believe God has prepared me to be his type of pastor as written in Jeremiah.

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jeremiah 3:15) My heart mandates the approach to the Text be sensitive to the needs of those I serve.

IMPLICIT POLITICAL STANCE AND /OR EXPLICIT POLITICAL POSITION:

As a pastor I periodically sit with political leaders. Few, if any, of the people I represent are ever afforded this opportunity. My assignment is clear, I am their voice. In 2005, for the purpose of being more effective, politically, socially, and economically, nine pastors and I became a unified body. Our primary focus was to improve the quality of life for the community in particularly those people we serve. We vowed not to allow party affiliation to affect or influence our actions as a unified body. Prior to embracing my assignment of being the voice of the people I serve or becoming a member of the unified body of pastors, I took a neutral position related to politics. The method of which I interpret the Text remain intact, however my approach to the Text is affected.

CUSTOMARY EXPOSURES TO THE SACRED (RELIGIOUS) TEXT: As a youth until the age of nineteen, I was a member of a traditional southern Black Baptist church. I was not active in any church from June of 1962, until December 1976. In January of 1977 my family and I joined a Black Baptist church in New York. The church dynamics were quite different from what I was familiar with. The New York church was more charismatic and energetic. Initially, I was not sure if I could embrace those church dynamics. Exposures to the Sacred (Religious) Text have influenced my approach to and interpretation of the same. As Christians, we are commissioned to praise God: “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord, Praise ye the Lord.” (Psalm 150:6) “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips

giving thanks to his name. But to do well and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (Hebrews 13:15) My worship and preaching are with purpose and passion.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE SACRED (RELIGIOUS) TEXT: Mathew Henry, Frank Charles Thompson, Thomas Nelson, Herbert Lockyer, Matthew Poole and Marvin R. Vincent, to mention a few, have had a tremendous affect on my approach to and interpretation of the Text over the years. I frequently use Matthew Henry and Herbert Lockyer primarily because they seem to be more detailed. I do not use a study guide. I do, however, having read the Kings James Version, reread the text from the New King James version, New International version, and Contemporary version for clarity.

PUBLISHED RESOURCES: The resources I regularly uses (a few cited in 11) are extremely valuable to me. I often use these trusted resources in preparation, or and completion of a potential presentation. I trust these published resources because I have tested their contents over the years.

INTENT AND EFFECT OF “PREACHING”: As a pastor, I understand the Sacred (Religious) Text to be the divine substance for preaching. In 2 Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy to Preach: “Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2nd Timothy 4:2) “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1st Corinthians 1:21) I contend that the believers are the religious community of whom the preached word of God will enhance their relationship with The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. I am convinced that the word of God is powerful enough to effect change in our society.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, I am compelled to seize the moment and proclaim the Gospel with passion.

ORIENTATION TO (RELIGIOUS) SCHOLARS AND/OR SCHOLARSHIP:

Gregory VII, King Henry IV, Justin, Aristides, Athenagoras, Theophilus and Clement of Alexandria, (coupled with the scholars in response 11), has forced me to rethink and often time reread the Text. I compare the scholar claims to other sources prior to accepting or rejecting their interpretation. Over the years the scholarship I am familiar with has increased my sense of confidence in the study of the Text.

FAMILY INFLUENCE: My parents although wise, did not finish high school. Their interpretive skills of the Text were limited. My parents would religiously read their bibles. They maintained a rich religious tradition in the home. Prayer was mandatory at least three times a day. You could not eat a meal at their table without prayer. The family ate breakfast and dinner together most often than not every day. My father would often time listen to each child's bedtime prayer. Many of those traditions and values became part of my household. For example many years (1962 to 1976), I mirrored my father by not attending church. The family was instructed to have a strong prayer life and sit and eat their meals as a family. After having a personal encounter with God my views of the Sacred (Religious) Text took on a new perspective. I have a thirst for divine knowledge. My approach to and interpretation of the Sacred (Religious) Text became more purpose oriented.

LIFE CRISES: I have experienced several family crises in my life. All of which have had lasting effects. As a close knitted family, I saw God in an unusual way as I did the

eulogy of my mother, father, younger brother, and oldest sister. As difficult as I assumed those assignments were, God revealed himself to me in a real way when I was summoned to the scene of my third son “Ato” lying on the ground in a comatose state. He was knocked over one hundred feet in the air by a vehicle entering the street from a 7-11 store driveway. Ato was riding his motor bike to church. When I arrived at the scene, my son was surrounded by emergency workers. As a former New York City police sergeant, I immediately knew by the way the area was taped off there was a serious injury or death. With my faith in God, I fell on my knees, placed my hand on my son and began to pray. I was compelled to trust God: “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (James 5:15) The Lord manifested the essence of his healing power that day; in that my son walked out of the hospital, after being in a comatose state, shaking violently as if going into shock and helicopter to Stony Brook Medical Center trauma unit the same day. I became more convinced than ever before in God’s healing power. I saw the miraculous hand of God transform my son from death to life. According to Dr. Curtis L. Whitney a crisis is a precipitating event in which an individual experiences a feeling of being overwhelmed and unable to do anything about the existing condition. He continues it is the inability to cope with situations which are perceived as too great or overwhelming, and seeks for prompt resolution or new action.⁵⁰

HERMENEUTICAL SUSPICION: Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth could cause much concern to the present day Christian community. In an effort to address issues regarding women in the church he wrote “Let your women keep silent in the

⁵⁰ Whitney, Curtis Leroy, “Developing A Team Of Lay Caregivers For Short-Term Crisis” (D. Min. diss Drew University, 1991), .x.

churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husband at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” (1st Corinthians 14:34-35) Obviously there are those who use this Text in a harmful manner towards the women’s movement. I believe that the Christian Community needs the participation of all, particularly the women. Whenever and wherever possible, I promote women, encourage women and remind whoever will listen of Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see vision.” (Acts 1:17)

SPIRITUALITY OR DIVINE GUIDANCE: My experience in spiritual awareness or guidance from God is enhanced through prayer, meditation and fasting. My methods are often met with open conflict by others as well as forces within me. I am driven by a desire to seek knowledge of God for the purpose of enlarging my Christological horizon, and ministering to the people of God. As I attempt to quench this thirst for knowledge and understanding, by attending minister’s conferences, retreats, Christian education sessions, and interacting and dialoging with scholarly men and women of God, I am enabled through divine revelation to become more effective.

LEARNING FROM THIS SELF-INVENTORY

HOW DO I MIX AND PRIORITIZE THE FACTORS? Prioritizing or ranking these hermeneutical factors in terms of importance in my textual interpretation would be extremely difficult if not impossible. I recognize that most factors are foundational which is why it is so difficult to rank or prioritize them. I cannot detect at this time any factors at work that are not identified in the self-inventory.

WHAT NEXT STEPS DO I WANT TO TAKE? The new awareness I gained from this self-inventory about how I actually approach and interpret the Sacred (Religious) Text is a foundation that began to shape at birth. I am always open to becoming better at my craft. Even though I am pleased with my attitude and practice, I would consider change to become more adequate and self-consistent biblical interpreter. I will continue to pursue knowledge, wisdom and understanding as I am led by God.

CHAPTER 6: NARRATIVE ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

AWARENESS

Historically St John's Baptist Church has called and embraced Black Baptist preachers. With few exceptions the fellowships have been limited to Black Baptist Churches. The exceptions were Black Methodist and Black Pentecostals ministries. Transformation from traditional Baptist to Multifaith has required a period of preparation. Inclusion required much prayer and meditation for me (the preacher/teacher) and the congregation (members). I support the Shelp and Sunderland position that Theological absolutism is not only counterproductive for world development and peace, but also contrary to the most profound meaning of Jesus.⁵¹ I minister to real people who are encountering real problems. The St. Johns Family that, I am blessed to serve is also affected by our present economy. They realize that they are in unfamiliar waters seeking directions. Many of them are single parents, who have lost their financial means of support. They are dealing with home foreclosure proceedings. These people are confronted daily with prioritizing keeping a roof over their families, paying past due utility bills or feeding their families.

Teen pregnancy is not just a news media report or irrelevant statistics from an unknown source but is often a part of their household. AIDS is not a foreign removed disease; on the contrary members of their immediate family have died from it or are

⁵¹ Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland, *The Pastor as Theologian* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1988), 65.

expected to die in the near future. The people of God I administer to desire to experience a sensitive God of Love and Compassion with real solutions. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) God gave the best He had to whosoever would receive Him. I am compelled to agree with the Shelp and Sunderland assertion that Black Christians are wary of people who rush to judgment about what is right and what is wrong of dogmatic confessions of faith and churches that are so proud of their doctrinal purity that they cannot imagine any imperfection in their social policies and practices.⁵² I realize that by the grace of God, I am finally (after a wilderness experience) pursuing a divine destiny. I am seeking to be God’s true Pastor, Preacher, and Prophet. “The true prophet speaks with the heart of a pastor and with the passion of one who has seen and felt the pain and suffering of the dispossessed, and the disenfranchised. The true prophet’s denunciation has the force of righteousness to the extent that it is born out of care - both for the oppressed and for the oppressors.”⁵³

The Christian community is commanded to adhere to the word of God as it is recorded. Please note the inspired word of God, “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15). The Pastor/Prophet is mandated by God to proclaim the word of God with an assurance of understanding to the children of God. Theology void of application violates God’s promise of deliverance. Understanding provides the means of how to for application. My challenge, as I address the passion of preparing the youth of St. Johns Baptist Church, is

⁵² Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland. *The Pastor as Theologian* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1988), 65.

⁵³ Earl E. Shelp, , *The Pastor as Prophet* , 11.

to interact and dialogue with members of other Christian communities is to make the church aware of the need simultaneously as I minister to them effectively concerning their individual needs. As I move forward, admittedly, I am reinvigorated daily by three compelling factors:

1. I am an instrument of God by His Mercy, Grace and Favor.
2. A divine call by God to the Pastor/Teacher is an awesome responsibility.
3. God's living word should meet the people at their individual situation.

Sermon Excerpts from March – June, 2009

March 1, 2009, 11 AM, “Still Black and Proud,”.

Scripture reference: Acts 8:26-27:

Introduction

The fact that God is love was emphasized. The gift of His Son was to whomever believes in him not to a particular faith community. Christians must strive to mature their faith and learn to recognize and respect neighboring faith communities.

Body

Illuminated God obvious inclusion; God used Phillip a Jew, to preach about Jesus to an Ethiopian. He was a Black man with great authority under the Ethiopian queen Candace.

Conclusion

Emphasis was on the fact that this Black man of authority was a worshiper returning from Jerusalem. He was attempting to read when Phillip approached him. By his admission, the Ethiopian did not understand what he was reading. Phillip explained the text and, when afforded the opportunity, he baptized the Ethiopian. Inclusion is a major component of God's divine master plan for his creation.

March 8, 2009, 11AM “Preparing for the Unexpected”

Scripture reference: Revelation 7: 9- 17

Introduction

The picture was drawn of God's obvious inclusion of all nations, kindred's, people and tongues; a number no man could number was present in Glory

Body

The multitude of participants had performed that which was necessary to inherit eternal life. All present worshiped the one and only God in unison. There was no division or multiple faith communities.

Conclusion

Do all you can to inherit eternal life according to the word of God. Upon your arrival do not be surprised at who will answer the roll call.

March 15, 2009, 11AM. "Everything that Glitters is not Gold"
Scripture reference: Acts 8:9-25

Introduction

The people of Samaria, out of ignorance, confused the works of Simon the sorcerer as the works of God.

Body

Stay in the word regardless of who you interact with. When God is glorified sinners will repent. Do not allow the glitter of silk tongue to determine your faith.

Conclusion

Everything that looks good to you is not necessarily good for you. Everything that sounds good is not necessarily good for edification. Gold may glitter, but everything that glitters is not necessarily gold. Simon acts appeared to be of God, I am sure they sounded as if they were of God, but the record stated they were of witchcraft.

April 5, 2009, 11AM. “Some Things Must Die for Others to Live”
Scripture reference: John 12:23 – 27

Introduction

In retrospect, one of the regrets of my past is not being able to live on a farm. I have been told by too many that it is an awful experience and that I should thank God that He protected me from that experience. When I respond, what is so difficult with burying a purchased pack of dead seed as I have done in the back yard, and at the appointed time reap a harvest? I am told you don't have a clue; some things must die for others to live.

Body

Jesus uses a grain of corn to illustrate life beyond our current conditions. We as a people are a sum total of all our experiences, ideologies, gifts and prejudices. All of which are tremendous obstacles and hindrances to a multifaith initiative. Thus some things must die for others to live.

Conclusion

This is no secret to the true believer, for we know that the old man must die so we can submit to the will of God. If we are to embrace inclusion and multifaith we need to know we stand on a solid foundation of a new birth because the old person is dead. We can appreciate our neighbor as we celebrate our Christian community.

April 12, 2009, 11 AM. Sermon Topic: "He is Risen and Yet Alive"
Scripture reference: Luke 24: 5-6

Introduction

We as Christians must be resolved that we serve a risen savior. We engage the other with respect and openness regarding methodology. Our purpose of dialogue is not to seek the living savior.

Body

Christ came to redeem mankind with a plan. After all He is a God of order. As He had proclaimed earlier the grave was a temporary location; In fulfillment of his promise He rose in three days leaving the tomb empty. As we engage in dialogue with other faith communities it is with strength not weakness. The Christian community stands on a proven solid foundation.

Conclusion

The Apostles confirmed the fact of a risen savior at their arrival at the tomb. For Jesus was not there He had risen as He said He would. More importantly, Jesus made a personal appearance to the disciples after His death. Only God's Son has the power to lay his life down and rise up again and be seen by others as He walked this earth.

April 19, 2009, 11 AM. Sermon Topic: "Evidence of a Believer"
Scripture reference: John 20:29-31

Introduction

It is imperative that the believer exemplify a resolved trust in God, who they have not seen, by having faith at all times. The believer resolved should be perceived by onlookers particularly in a multifaith initiative. There should be an obvious

demonstration of a life changing experience in the total person. Attending and supporting their church of choice should be a desire and not a dreadful choice

Body

The text revealed Jesus presenting Himself to the disciples the evening of the first day of the week. Thomas one of the disciples, was not present at Jesus initial appearing before the other disciples. On hearing of Jesus visitation Thomas informed them that unless he see for himself the print of the nails in His hands, and put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into his side he will not believe

Conclusion

Jesus emphasized the fact that the “blessed are they that have not seen and have yet believe.” (John 20:29) The true believer must live a life based on faith in God. He who comes to God must demonstrate belief, trust and confidence that God is a promise keeper according to the word of God. Evidence of which is their Christ like lifestyle which should be observed by the world.

May 3, 2009, 11 AM. Sermon Topic: “Gift of Christ
Scripture reference: Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Ephesians 4:7-11

Introduction

The Christian community argues that God qualifies those whom He uses as instruments to minister to His people in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. After preparation the chosen men and women are commanded by God to speak that which only God has commanded.

Body

As we proclaim the word of God as instruments of God, it is incumbent upon us to not only be in His will, but also be cognizant of His time. Considering the global reaction to interfaith and the interreligious activities, I am convinced that God would have us embrace this paradigm shift to multifaith. For it is Gods desire that all faith communities become one.

Conclusion

The Instrument of God must be prepared by God to be transformed from a life laced with the prejudices and evils of this world to a life complete with a position of love and respect for people from all faith communities. It is imperative that the Christian community recognize the sent person is a gift of God to the body of believers for their edification.

May 17, 2009, 11AM. Sermon Topic: "Pursuing Divine Destiny"
Scripture reference: Psalm 23:4 and Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction

There is a blessed assurance that the most powerful force known to mankind is leading, guiding, directing and protecting you as you pursue your destiny.

Body

There is an evil force in this world. It's his primary objective is to prevent the move of God in total. John 10:10 emphasizes that this evil force came with a purpose of destruction. The good news however is that the same verse proclaims that Jesus came that we "might have life, and have it in abundance". If multifaith is the move of God

the evil force of this world does not want it to be fruitful. As children of God it's mandatory we go forward with vigor and vitality because of the assurance of God's protection.

Conclusion

Even when our assignment directs us to the valley of the shadow of death we can go through with confidence. For as believers we must pursue our divine destiny. God who is the author of our existence will clarify our destiny and empower us to pursue it.

May 24, 2009, 11AM. The Sermon Topic: "The Church"
Scripture reference: Matthew 16:18 and Colossians 1:24

Introduction

As long as I can recall most people take ownership of their church of choice. Too often this type of ownership is detrimental to the growth of the church particularly at St. Johns Baptist Church. Visitors and new members should perceive a spirit of love in the "House of God". Jesus proclaimed, He would build "His church." (Matthew 16:18)

Body

Jesus proclaimed that the revelation of Peter from God would be the foundation upon which He would build His Church. Christians are the body of the church and Jesus Christ is the head. The building we acknowledge as church is simply the place of worship for the people of God. The church is a place to be revered by all because the Spirit of God has promised to meet the people there. Believers understand "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2nd Corinthians 3:17) Liberation brings

about deliverance. People are freed from their sin nature and learn to establish a lasting relationship with Christ as they get to know Him. In reverence of God's house we are careful who we invite in and provide a platform to stand before the people of God. When I as your pastor, prayerfully invited a Muslim minister God was preparing us for a paradigm shift to multifaith.

Conclusion

If we must take ownership of the church let us do it with a spirit of God. "God who so loved the world He gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth in Him would have an opportunity to have eternal life". (John 3:16) We as members should embrace each other and "let brotherly love continue." (Hebrews 13:1)

June 7, 2009, 11AM. The Sermon Topic: "Determine to Press Until I Reach the Mark".
Scripture reference: Philippians 3:13-17

Introduction

Christians will interact with members of other faith communities as we press toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Those we interact with will either be supportive, non-supportive or indifference to our journey. The Christian community must persevere regardless of those who seem to be determined to abort our journey.

Body

The text emphasizes the Christian community's unavoidable engagement of others, with a warning "beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." (Philippians 3:2) Many of those we interact with are obvious and not so obvious enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul, the author of this text admitted he once "persecuted the church." (Philippians 3:6) The writer challenges the Christian

community to “be followers of him as an example of pressing toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:2).

Conclusion

All members of the Christian community must aggressively press toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. We have been empowered by a sovereign God. God promised that as we go “He would be with us always even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20) We shall succeed because “we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.” (Philippians 4:13) The Christian community will interact with our non-Christian neighbors on our journey. As we interact with our neighbor we will become more informed of their faith as we remain loyal to Christianity.

June 14, 2009, 11 A.M. The Sermon Topic: “God’s Love Is For Real
The Scripture reference: Luke 12:22

Introduction

Jesus illuminates God’s love and concern for all mankind regardless of their faith community through a vivid pictorial illustration of His care and protection of nature.

Body

After Jesus emphasized God’s passion in providing for nature, He brilliantly reveals through the question, “how much more are we better than the fowls, lilies or grass?” (Luke 12:24) The text emphasizes God’s concern for people regardless of their faith communities. Too often the things the Christian communities are concerned about such as food, clothing and shelter “the nations of the world seek after also.” (Luke 12:30) Those basic needs are certainly shared common concerns for meaningful dialogue but not worry about. “God knows the Christian community have need of them.”

Conclusion:

The text is inclusive and challenging for mankind. All persons are challenged to look beyond their individual bias, prejudices, and ideologies and see the reality of God's love. For if mankind learn to "first seek the kingdom of God, all of these things will be added." (Luke 12:31).

June 21, 2009, 11 AM. The Sermon Topic: "A Father Who Can Remain a Father"
The Scripture reference: Luke 15:17-20.

Introduction

The text highlights a hungry young Jew experiencing a rude awakening, as he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him." (Luke 15:16) Although he was destitute, he realized he had a father who had plenty. The young man made a conscious decision to return to his father's house and seek forgiveness. When he returned to his father's house to his amazement his father received him with open arms

Body

In respect to Father's Day, the text states "a certain man had two sons." (Luke 15:11) The father relinquished a portion of his finances to the younger of his two sons upon his request. The youngest of his sons went to a far country and wasted all that he had. The text stated this prodigal son "joined a citizen of that country after he wasted all that he had on riotous living." (Luke 15:15) A Jew in a pig pen of a citizen in a foreign country is indicative of what one will do to address hunger regardless of their faith community.

Conclusion

I am convinced that a father who can embrace a son who had wasted his substance with riotous living should be celebrated. I am further convinced that the actions of that son were not unique. That certain father simply calls our attention to a great example that has been set before us. As our Father in Heaven has forgiven us for our wrongs, that certain father forgave his son. A faithful father, for the love of family, will forgive.

BIBLE STUDY

In an effort to address the spiritual growth of the focus group of St. Johns Baptist Church, I needed to determine their biblical knowledge. In my introduction, I made reference to Kate McCarty's report of the results of a 2006 study that 82 per cent of people affiliated with a local church and 71 per cent of those who feel close to God knew very little about God or religion. I extracted the following basic questions from the Holy Bible to use as a questionnaire for the focus group.

QUESTIONNAIRE OF G O D

Please Mark the Answer That Is Most Correct

1.	God is sovereign	A. Sunday only___	B. Weekdays only___	
	God is a:	C. Saturday only___.	D. Always___	E. Never___
		A. Human being___.	B. Spirit___.	C. Monk___.
		D. Alien___.	E. It___.	
	Jesus is:	A. The son of God___.	B. The son of man___.	
		C. God___.	D. Savior___.	E. All of the above___.
	God is the:	A. Holy Spirit___	B. Jesus___	C. The Heavenly Father___.
		D. All three___.	E. None of these___.	
	The Father, Son And Holy Spirit	A. Are one___.	B. Three Separate person___.	
		C. Trinity___.	D. Have separate office___.	E. All of the Above___
	Christians are	A. Perfect___.	B. Evil___.	C. Abnormal___.
		D. Christ like___	E. None of the above___.	
	God created:	A. Most of the world ___	B. Only man and woman___.	C. All that is___.
		D. with Satan's help	E. Only the flying Birds___.	

Please answer the following, True (T) or False (F)

- Those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth: ____.
- Without faith it is impossible please God____.
- Christians need to be Christ like not necessarily holy like some denominations, but true Christians____.

Each question received a weight of 10 points per question with the highest mark one could receive was 100. Eleven youth were present and completed the survey. The marks ranged from 90 to 50. Three students received marks of 50, one 60, two 70, three 80, two 90 with average of the eleven participating students at 70 per cent. From the

result of this survey it was clear my focus group fared higher than the study McCarty referred to, however I included a refresher and some remedial teaching of God in our lesson plan.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Eastern Baptist Association

Eastern Baptist Association launched a federally funded youth initiative under Moderator Reverend William A. Watson. Eastern Baptist Association (EBA.) is the largest Baptist Association in the Empire Baptist State Convention and the National Baptist Convention. At full strength it boasts of having a membership of 200 plus registered churches. The geographical area includes Brooklyn, New York to Eastern Long Island. All youth from EBA was encouraged to become participants of this initiative. As a registered church, many of the youth of St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview, including my focus group became participants. The classes were from 6PM. until 9PM. week days and 9AM. until 3PM., Saturdays. I accepted an invitation to teach on Saturdays from 9AM. to 11AM. The invitation to me was based on my experience as a former New York City Police Sergeant, High School Guidance Counselor, Pastor and Seminarian.

My weekly workshops were divided into three areas. First: Evaluation of self. Second: Exploring the world around you. Third: Engaging the world around you – “Keeping it Real.” These are excerpts from the Saturday workshops

Evaluation of Self

The class began with prayer by one of the students. After introducing myself, I emphasized the need to respect the privacy of each student as we explore sensitive areas.

There were eight students present between the ages of 15 to 18. Three of the students in my class were part of my focus group. We sat in a semi circle. In an effort to break the ice, each person was asked to introduce themselves to the class and share something about their lives. They were understandably reserved in their initial response to the request. Students were from Long Island and attended schools in Nassau and Suffolk counties. All were however active in school and church. Six of the youth in attendance wanted to pursue college degrees after high school. One would attend an automotive trade school and another was not quite sure. After the break, the class explored the possible faith communities one would encounter after leaving high school.

The following Saturday, the first hour we continued the discussion about college requirements after an opening prayer by one of the students. I emphasized the importance of the grade point average and the impact it had on college acceptance. I related a true story of my acquaintance with a young lady in Europe who had been featured in Ebony Magazine. She was awarded over four hundred thousand dollars of college scholarships. She convinced the awarding agents to defer some of the scholarship money to a fellow classmate and friend after her schooling was paid in full. Much of the money had to be returned. When asked how it was possible to be awarded such a large amount of scholarship money, she stated, “I simply did what too many youth are not doing, I applied”. I encouraged the students to do research to, see what grants, aids and scholarship funds are available and apply for them. Know that “God will supply all your needs according to His riches in heaven.” (Philippians 4:19)

In the second hour we continued in self exploration with the topic of clothing, fashions and fads. The students with the exception of one had revealed that they were

from single parents homes of limited income. At the risk of seeming as if I was making a stereotypical observation, although the students were from single family homes, they were wearing the latest fashionable name brand expensive outerwear. When I complimented them on their clothing, I was informed, of the importance of an undocumented dress code among their peers. I was also informed that wearing their pants in what is perceived, by many adults, as inappropriate was no big deal, and not meant to be offensive, it was just the style. By my request the 9AM. group joined in with the 11AM. group for a closing prayer.

The 11AM. class was convening and we were concluding our 9AM. class. Ten of the students from the arts and culture class taught by Evangelist Shelia Thomas at 11AM. were members of St. Johns Baptist Church.

The following Saturday we began the first hour by exploring fads. We explored the following questions: What are fads? Where do fads come from? Who establishes fads? How are people who establish fads empowered? The students were amazed to learn that it is inferred that the style of wearing pants below the waist line derived from prisoners who were not allowed to have belts while incarcerated. They all agreed to reconsider the importance they placed on fads. The last hour we explored relationships. The students embraced this hour with mixed emotions. As a facilitator I felt it was incumbent upon me to engage all the participants. The members of St. Johns were guarded in their response of the opposite sex primarily because of their relationship with me. I discussed sexual transmitted diseases, including aids. I discussed promiscuous behavior, teen pregnancy and abstention. I believe the students were able to make better decisions with additional information regarding sexually transmitted diseases.

Exploring the World around You:

After our morning prayer, we drove to Nassau Correctional Facility. Although this was an unscheduled visit, the sergeant on duty gave a 15 minute overview of the system including the fact that many Christians become Muslims while in prison. We expressed our sincere gratitude to the sergeant and walked to the parking lot. There I directed the students' attention to all the grieving mothers. I pointed out that most of them had small children with them. I informed them that God came that they should have life in abundance and not cause grief for themselves and their love ones. (John 10:10) We arrived back at the school at 10:45AM. I asked them to think about what they had seen and heard and we would discuss it next week.

The following week, after the opening prayer, I led the students in role playing of an innocent young man and a police officer. The young man coming from a local store he had visited on a number of occasions was approached by a police vehicle and requested to stop. Knowing he was innocent, the young man immediately reached into his pocket and pulled out his new shinning blackberry to call home. Initially the students were in agreement, that the young man acted properly. I added that the officers asked him to stop because they had just received a call describing this young man's apparel, height, complexion, armed and dangerous who had just raped and robbed an elder woman two blocks away. The students were not so sure the young man acted appropriately. I asked the students to place themselves in the officer's position who wanted to return home to his family after work. With only 15 minutes remaining, I informed them of the proper way to respond to police officers and I promised to continue this discussion next week and also deal with the scene at Nassau Correctional Facility.

Engaging the World Around you/Keeping it Real

The following week after devotion, my class and I took a nature walk. I intentionally took a route that would pass the court located on Main Street in Hempstead. During our walk, we observed an older gentleman urinating on a building and a younger man lying in the street. We emphasized the fact that these men did not wake up one morning and decided they wanted to be homeless. This could happen to any one particularly if they are not goal oriented. I reminded them of their dreams and goals discussed earlier. I challenged them not be afraid to have goals, have a plan and work their plan. I informed them that they were at a ripe age to set goals and work to establish their goals.

The following week we drove to the Hempstead Police Department. We did not have an appointment and could not find anyone willing to make themselves available to speak to the youth in the precinct. As we were leaving, I spoke to an officer in the parking lot who gladly spoke to my class. He talked to them with regards to being stopped by an officer. He told them how to address an officer and how to act when being arrested whether one is innocent or guilty. The officer explained that if one committed a crime it was his sworn duty to arrest them regardless of their race or religion. He also emphasized the advantages of becoming an officer, in particular the salary and the opportunity to get a better understanding of all religions. When we returned to the school, I reemphasized the fact that becoming a police officer was one of the best jobs I have had. I was exposed to a multitude of faith communities in the ranks and by way of assignments in the public.

Evaluation

The students gained a better understanding of their rights and the rights and authority of police officers to stop and frisk. Their rights as Christians were equal to the rights of members of all faith communities. They are now less likely to be involved in an altercation with an authority figure. The students could now interact with Police officers with greater respect of the officer and their faith of choice. As we engaged the world around us the students became more aware of their neighbors and other faith communities.

CHAPTER 7: NARRATIVE ON FOCUS GROUPS

St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview

On Wednesday, March 11, 2009, I conducted my first focus group forum on preparing high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. We met at St. Johns Baptist Church at 7:30PM until 8:15PM. I emphasized my sincere appreciation to the youth staff and the youth for giving up 45 minutes and promised that I would limit the sessions to 30 minutes in the future. The session opened in prayer by one of the youth. We exchanged informal greetings primarily because there was no reason for introductions in that we are all familiar members of the church. I gave a brief overview of the New York Theological Seminary, Doctoral of Ministry Program I am presently in, and explained why I chose to do this project. I expressed my gratitude for their participation and informed them that their identity and responses would be kept confidential. They were informed that the only text they would be responsible for was their bible. I explained the role of the adults present. The floor was opened for questions without a response. The youth were separated and given a questionnaire (See Appendix B-135) and a number 2 pencil. They were instructed not to communicate with each other prior to the completion of the questionnaire and not to put their name on the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected and again I expressed my gratitude and stated I would see them on next Wednesday, March 18 at 7:30 PM.

There were 11 youth present for this first focus group session and 5 members of the training team were present. The team members, like the primary focus group are members of St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview. Present, were Evangelist Shelia Thomas, Evangelist Christina Nichols, Trustee Brenda Bright, Trustee Coleen Jackson and Sister Jamelia Forrester. The team member not present, who serve as the coordinator was Reverend Hazel G. Thomas. The 11 youth of the focus group that was present ranged in age from 13 to 17. As stated previously, this focus group consisted of members of St. Johns who attend excellent schools. Identifying those schools and the students' ages would violate the agreement of confidentiality.

On March 18, 2009 at 7:30 PM., the second focus group session was opened with prayer by one of the youth. Two members of the group had invited a friend and requested permission for the friend to sit in. With the participants permission the visitors were welcomed to the session. There was a total of 15 youth present for that session. This session as promised began at 7:30PM. and concluded at 8pm. With the exception of two members, the group was eager to know the result of the survey. When I informed them that we would not discuss individual grades even the two silent participants joined in the exuberant chatter. I reminded the participants that it would be difficult to give grades even if I wanted to because no one signed their paper. According to the group's individual comments each scored a mark of 100. There were remarks like, "I know without a doubt I made 100 on that easy test".

I expressed my sincere appreciation for their confidence. I also took this opportunity to challenge them to let their confidence be sustenance and not without merit. The students was separated and given a second questionnaire. (See Appendix B-138)

The remaining of the allotted time was used to discuss survey and the first chapter of the book of John. The discussion began with a statement from me that all did fairly well, with an overall average of 70 percent. I explained how I arrived at the average of 70 percent. All the students were encouraged and informed that some had scored higher than others but unfortunate there were no perfect scores of 100. I was quick to emphasize that in grading the surveys it was obvious that there should have been perfect scores. “Some of you knew the answers, but you made mistakes that will continue to affect your grades if you fail to address them”. I informed them to read all the possible answers before you select what you believe is the correct one. They told to read the questions carefully. Unless otherwise stated, chose only one answer per question. If you are not sure of an answer don’t be too quick to erase your first guess. We concluded with an assignment to read the first three chapters of the gospel of John.

March 25, 2009, 7:30PM. The third session opened with prayer from a youth from the church. All members of an age which we believe that they can speak with reasonable clarity and have a limited understanding of praying were encouraged to pray openly publicly and privately. We discussed from the assigned reading, “God and The word” and “Being Born Again.” Students were assigned to read 2 Timothy with emphasis on chapter 2, verses 11-16, and chapter 3, verses 16-17.

April 1, 2009, at 7:30PM. The Fourth session opened with prayer from team member trustee Coleen Jackson. We discussed from the assigned reading “The Importance of Reading the Bible” and the “Authenticity of Scripture.” The students agreed they should be more attentive in Sunday school and Bible study. In respect of the Holy Week and Easter our next session was convened on Wednesday April 15, at

7:30PM. Students were assigned to read the 18th, 19th and 20th chapters of the gospel of John and be prepared to explain the arrest, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On Wednesday April 15, the fifth session convened at St. Johns. The session was opened with prayer from one of the youth. The students were all given an opportunity to explain what the crucifixion, death and resurrection meant to them. There was a general consensus that Christ died for their sins. As time ran out, the students were stuck on resurrection. As I promised we began our discussion on resurrection, on Wednesday

April 22, 2009. The students were assigned to read the first three chapters of Genesis and be prepared to explain the creation and fall of man. We continued to enlighten as we exposed the youth of St. Johns of others in Bible Study, Sunday worship, and retreats. The staff and I was even more aggressive in teaching the youth and raising their consciousness about the person, present, and perfect plan of God.

Evaluation

As a result of this project the high school students at St. Johns Baptist Church of Lakeview gained a better understanding of their faith traditions and are better prepared to be educated in a multifaith world. The training has also challenged the youth of St. Johns to continue to enhance their knowledge of God and other faith communities. 50% of the focus group participated in a planning session. The planning session was designed by the West Hempstead Ministers Alliance to include other Christians, Jews, and Buddhist youths. The session took place as scheduled February 28, 2010 at 6PM. at the Trinity Lutheran Church. The youth leaders, who facilitated the session, reported that the focus group interacted and dialogued with members of other faiths with confidence. I believe the focus group representatives were better prepared to interact and dialogue with

members of other faiths because of this project. I also believe they are better prepared to be educated in a multifaith world based on the results of their religious socialization at the planning session. The primary purpose of that initial planning session was to solicit input from all participating faith communities' youth for a project they can jointly pursue in the future. .

Birmingham, Alabama

On July 3, 2009 at the Thomas Family Home, 3711 Terrace G, Birmingham Alabama, I assembled 10 family members aged 12 to 16 years old. They agreed to answer the questionnaire after I gave an overview of the project. (See Appendix B-134) The questionnaire results revealed that the 10 students had an average of 72 percent in their knowledge of God. On July 5, I explained to the students that there was a paradigm shift to multifaith. I also explained that their ability to interact and dialogue with members of other faith communities would have an impact on their success in the world of work and at institutions of higher learning.

Evaluation

The 72 percent average of knowing God was consistent with St. Johns Baptist Church's participant's average of 70 percent. These students like those mentioned by Kate McCarthy were all affiliated with a local congregation. Unlike the results of her reported findings however these students revealed they knew, like those of St. Johns members, enough about God to build on.⁵⁴ This group was receptive to being prepared to be educated in a multifaith world.

⁵⁴Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounters In America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 10.

First Baptist Church of Far Rock Away

Friday July 24, 7PM. As an invited guest by Pastor Dwayne Sleet, I gave a brief explanation of the project and my passion of preparing high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. Six adults and twelve students between the ages of 14-18 were each handed a questionnaire. (See Appendix B-136) I emphasized Confidentiality and informed them not to place their names on the questionnaire. They were each given a second questionnaire (See Appendix B-138) after the completion of the first which they also completed with the exception of one adult. She simply stated, that “she was too tired to do any more work.” Their average score of 62 percent was consistent with the findings of St. Johns and the Birmingham, Alabama focus groups.

The workshop was designed by the church to focus on the real issues that affect the quality of life for young people from a biblical perspective. This presented a great opportunity to invite the participants to consider the paradigm shift of multifaith world. I was able to engage them in dialogue regarding the importance of being prepared to interact with people of other faith community’s places of higher learning and the world of work. The workshop concluded after approximately 2 hours. In my closing remarks, I expressed my sincere gratitude’s to Pastor Sleet and the participants. I also reminded the participants that they were fortunate to be in a place with a leader that would be instrumental in their preparation to be educated in a multifaith world.

Evaluation

As a result of this workshop and based on the response of the participants, they are more receptive to education regarding other faith communities. The participants were more open to learning about critical issues that affect their own faith community. The

participants will also be willing to be more consistent in acknowledging and respecting members of other faiths.

CHAPTER 8: NARRATIVE ON PLAN OF EVALUATION

AWARENESS:

Goal one was to raise the awareness of St. Johns Baptist Church congregation and surrounding community about the importance of preparing high school students to be educated in a multifaith world by implementing the following strategies:

Strategy 1.

Delivery of a series of sermons regarding multifaith at St. Johns Baptist Church and surrounding churches from March to June, 2009. In March, I delivered sermons at Friendship Baptist Church of Roslyn, Mt. Mariah Baptist Church of Brooklyn, New Life Independent Church of Hempstead, Tabernacle of Joy Holiness of Uniondale, and Trinity Baptist Church of Bayside. In April, I delivered sermons at New Hope Baptist Church of Amityville, First Baptist Church of Lawrence, Judea Baptist Church of Hempstead and Assembly of Prayer Baptist Church of Roslyn. In July, I delivered sermons in Faith Baptist Church in Huntington, Lily Star Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama and The Faith Baptist Cathedral of Hempstead. I informed each pastor that I was a seminary student at New York Theological Seminary on arrival. Each pastor permitted me to mention other faith communities and their shared concerns with the Christian community regarding the quality of life for the prisoners. I also emphasized, that the church has a major role in preparing their youth to be educated in a multifaith world. I answer questions regarding multifaith after service at each church.

Results:

Based on the attendance of the membership, visitors from West Hempstead faith communities, and the community at large at the August 9, 2009, 4PM. Ecumenical worship service, (See Appendix C-165-168) I felt the congregation was made more aware of the need to prepare the high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. The fact that a Jewish Rabbi's sermon (See Appendix A-116 and C-165) in a Christian church was received with a standing ovation from a congregation of more than 150 consisting of 90 per cent Christians (youth and adults) and 10 percent Jews coupled with a joyful harmonious fellowship proceeding the service confirmed my contention that the congregation was more aware of the need to prepare the high school students. The congregation was also made more aware of the importance of the affects of the multifaith initiative when all the participants at this service agreed to give the proceeds to St. Johns scholarship ministry. (See Appendix C-169-170)

The West Hempstead Ministerial Alliance second service was hosted by Rabbi Art Vernon and the Jewish Community Center of West Hempstead January 10, 2010 at 3pm.(See Appendix C-172-195) As the honored guest, I was received and made welcome with a warm standing exuberant ovation from a congregation of approximately 250 plus. In the audience was a multifaith assembly of approximately 85 percent Christians (adults and youth), 14.5 percent Jews and .5 percent Buddhist. My training team had the focus group sit up front. (See Appendix 183-184)) I was introduced to the congregation by Rabbi Art Vernon.(See Appendix 194) The St. Johns Baptist Choir was well received as they sang the sermonic selection with a spirit of a home environment. The ministerial alliance agreed to give all the proceeds from this service to a local feed the Hungry Inn. (See Appendix C-196) At the conclusion of the service, everyone was

invited to the fellowship hall for refreshments. The fellowship hall was filled with joyful chatter from the participating faith communities projecting a cohesive friendly spirit of unity

Conclusion:

I concluded that based on the attendance and the religious socialization between participants including the focus group, that St. Johns membership and the surrounding churches were made more aware of the need to prepare high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. I also concluded that the importance of a multifaith initiative was embraced by the congregation when the alliance agreed to give the proceeds to a local Homeless Inn. (See Appendix C-197)

Strategy 2.

I conducted a weekly Bible Study Series relative to Christians, Jews and Muslims in March and April, 2009 with the youth and adults on Wednesdays from 7:30PM. to 9PM. From 7:30PM. to 8PM. I taught the youth in the lower sanctuary and taught the adult in the main sanctuary from 8PM. to 9PM.

Results:

Based on the attendance and participation at Bible Study the membership including the youth was made more aware of the need to prepare our youth. The congregation was also made aware through the Sunday morning announcement by the church clerk and the pastor. At the youth Bible Study the focus group of St. Johns was made more aware through teaching, observing, participating in role playing and questionnaires. The youth attending Church Questionnaire results were:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
A. A tithing church	9-60%	3-20%	1-7%	2-14%
B. Interfaith teaching	5-34%	6-40%	2-14%	2-14%
C. Separate glasses for Boys and girls		1-7%	9-60%	5-34%
D. More sports activities	4-27%	5-34%	6-40%	
E. Youth preachers	3-20%	8-54%	2-14%	2-14%
F. Easy access to pastor	8-54%	4-27%	2-14%	1-7%
G. A mentorship ministry	7-47%	4-27%	2-14%	1-7%
H. Job/Survival skill training	7-47%	2-14%	2-14%	4-27%
I. Community outreach	11-74%	2-14%		2-14%
J. Young adult ministries	10-67%	2-14%		3-20%
K. Youth in leadership	5-34%	6-40%	2-14%	2-14%

Do you support interfaith ministry?

- A. In my church 10-67%
- B. In another church 5-34%

Do you think Interfaith have improved the quality of life for Christians today, are has life remained the same compared to twenty years ago?

- A. Getting better 10-67%
- B. Getting worse
- C. About the same
- D. Don't know 5-34%

Considering everything, do you think it is a good time or a bad time to teach youth of the Christian faith how to dialogue and interact with youth of other faith communities?

- A. Good time 12-80%
- B. Bad time
- C. Neither
- D. Don't know 3-20%

Do you think Christian youth generally put too much or too little emphasis on the following:

	Too much	Too little	About right	Don't know
A. Education		4-27%	9-60%	2-14%
B. Sports	3-20%	1-7%	7-47%	4-27%
C. Their families		2-14%	11-74%	2-14%
D. Their health		5-34%	7-47%	2-14%
E. Getting ahead at work		6-40%	5-35%	2-14%
F. Sex	2-14%	2-14%	7-47%	3-20%
G. Image (being tough)	1-7%	1-7%	8-54%	4-27%

Do you feel Christian youth encounter more or less obstacles or fewer obstacles? attempting to dialogue with youth of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

	More	Fewer	The Same	Don't Know
A. Jews	3-20%	2-14%	3-20%	7-47%
B. Muslims	4-27%	3-20%	1-7%	7-47%
C. Sikh	3-20%	3-20%	1-7%	8-54%

For each of the following, which ones are major concerns for the youth of any particular faith community?

	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh
a. HIV/Aids	10-67%	2-14%	2-14%	1-7%
b. Becoming involved in crime	10-67%	1-7%	4-27%	
c. Racial Discrimination	9-60%	3-20%	3-20%	
d. Poverty	7-47%	3-20%	5-34%	
e. Being Unemployed	9-60%	2-14%	3-20%	
f. Drugs and Alcohol	12-80%		2-20%	

g. Not being a responsible parent	9-60%	1-7%	4-27%	
h. Not serious about education	7-47%	2-14%	1-7%	2-14%
i. Lack of character	8-54%	3-20%	3-27%	1-7%

Do you think faith communities share similar concerns regarding quality of life for the youth of their respective communities?

Most Definitely	Possible	Nothing to compare
6-40%	8-54%	1-7%

Do you think America's economic system presents an interesting form for interfaith dialogue?

Christians	Jews	Muslims	Sikh	All faith communities
3-20%	2-14%	1-7%	4-27%	5-34%

Do you believe youth of all faith communities are equally prepared to dialogue and interact with members of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

Most Definitely Possible Need Improvement

Unknown

a. Christians more prepared	9-60%	1-7%	1-7%	4-27%
b. Jews more prepared	3-20%	3-20%		9-60%
c. Muslims more prepared	3-20%	2-14%		10-67%
d. Sikhs more prepared	1-7%	1-7%		13-87%

Do you think most Christian youth do or do not show proper respect for their Christian Ethics?

Do show proper respect	Do not show proper respect	Don't know
5-34%	13-87%	2-14%

As you may know African-American youth have a higher chance than most of attending prestigious Historical Black Colleges. For each, tell me weather you think it is a big reason, a small reason, or not a reason why this is true?

	Big Reason	Small Reason	Not a Reason	Don't Know
Intimidated by youth				

	of other faiths	5-34%	2-14%	2-14%	6-40%
a.	Poor Christian foundation	7-47%	2-14%	1-7%	5-34%
b.	Not prepared to dialogue	5-34%	3-20%	2-14%	5-34%
c.	Poor social skills	7-47%	1-7%	2-14%	5-34%
d.	Parents, Schools and Churches				

Are not preparing their youth

	For life beyond high school	7-47%	1-7%	1-7%	6-40%
e.	African-American youth have				
	Limited support	8-54%	2-14%		5-34%
	What is influencing the Christian youth and having a more, or lesser impact on them?				

		Strong Influence	Little Influence	No Influence	Don't Know
Race		10-67%		5-34%	
	a. The home	7-47%	5-34%	1-7%	2-14%
	b. The Church	12-80%	1-7%		2-14%
	c. Peers	6-40%	3-20%	2-14%	4-27%
	d. Gangs	5-34%	1-7%	3-20%	7-47%
	e. Crime	3-20%	5-34%	1-7%	6-40%
	f. Financial	5-34%	1-7%	5-34%	4-27%
	g. Sports	4-27%	6-40%	3-20%	2-14%
	h. The media and				
	entertainment	6-40%	3-20%	3-20%	3-20%
	i. The message in				
	music (Rap)	6-40%	3-20%	4-27%	2-14%
	j. The Schools	5-34%	7-47%	1-7%	2-14%

Conclusion:

Based on the Questionnaire, the exposure and interaction with other faith communities, and teaching of the focus group of St. Johns Baptist Church, I concluded that the membership was more aware of their diverse faith community neighbors and the need to prepare high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. I also concluded based on 80% of those who took and completed the questionnaire that they believe the time is right to teach the youth about multifaith. All of the participants agreed to support a multifaith initiative (67% at St. Johns and 34% at another church). The youth of St. Johns exemplified a greater level of confidence in a planning session as they dialogued and interacted with members of other faiths Sunday February 28, 2010.

Members of St John's are more aware of the need to respect their other faith community neighbors. The adults and youth are more aware of the common basic desire of all the people regardless of their faith community to live in, work in and receive a quality education in a safe environment.

Strategy 3.

I conducted workshops in West Hempstead, Far Rockaway, New York, Detroit, Michigan, and Birmingham, Alabama in June and July, 2009. Questionnaires were given out and returned after completion by participants in West Hempstead, Far Rockaway and Birmingham. (See Appendix B-136-149))

Results:

Based on the attendance and the number of completed questionnaires returned, I believe all participants were made more aware of the need to prepare high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. Each person was asked to complete two

questionnaires a combined total of 78 were given out and 74 completed and returned. (See Appendix B-149)

Conclusion:

The results show that youth were made more aware of the need to become prepared to be educated in a multifaith world. I also concluded that youth were made more aware of the need to improve their knowledge of God and the Christian community.

Recruit and Train Team

The second goal was to recruit and train a 5 member gender- inclusive team, who would assist me in preparing St. Johns high school students to be able to dialogue and interact with students of other faith communities at the college level.

Strategy 1.

The site team and I agreed on the following criteria for the training team: with an 80 point requirement.

Criteria	Points
Love people especially children	10
Patience	10
Hospitable	10
Faithful	10
Receptive to change	10
Teachable	10
Apt to teach	10
Respectful	10
Self motivated	10
Availability	10

I made the announcement from the pulpit about the need for persons to assist me in training the youth of St. Johns.

Results:

I was unable to get men to participate in this project primarily because of availability. Minister Enoch Thomas who often works with the youth met the criteria.

He volunteered to participate. However his employment schedule would only allow limited participation. The persons chosen were Evangelist Shelia Thomas, Evangelist Christina Nichols, Trustee Brenda Bright, Trustee Coleen Jackson, Sister Jamila Forrester and Reverend Hazel Thomas.

Conclusion:

This group met the criteria established by the site team and me with a score of 80 plus and was trained to assist me in working with the focus group.

Strategy 2.

I gave an orientation of the project to the training team April 1, 2009. They received additional training on April 8, 2009.

Results:

The team demonstrated commitment to and understanding of this project by their presence, participation and passion in the orientation and training sessions. The team also projected a strong desire to assist me by their willingness to travel wherever and whenever necessary to prepare the high school students to be educated in a multifaith world.

Conclusion:

Based on the training I concluded that this team was better prepared to assist me in this project. I also concluded based on their passion of the project, faithfulness to assigned tasks and commitment to youth they were better prepared to assist me in this project.

Strategy 3.

I engaged in a learning process that included inviting experts on religious diversity in higher education, book discussion and video discussions.

Results:

On Monday September 14, at 6PM. a contingent of the training team, focus group and I were invited to the home of a Turkish Muslim in celebration of Ramadan. On arrival we were extended genuine hospitality and invited to join in a Turkish meal. The focus group was hesitant to eat until I pointed out the similarity of the food with a different preparation. Mr. Sadri Altinok, president of the Turkish Culture Center of Long Island gave a brief overview of the Muslim community and explained Ramadan after dinner and desert. Mr. Altinok, home owner, training team, focus group and I engaged in informal dialogue the remaining of the evening,

On Thursday October 15, at 6PM. Reverend Hazel Thomas and I attended a Friendship dinner at the invitation of Sadri Altinok. This dinner was sponsored by the Turkish Culture Center of Long Island, New York. After dinner we viewed a video of Muslim life in Turkey and were introduced to the arts which include dance. Dr. Ismarl Acar from Bard College was the key note speaker. His speech titled “Three Principles in Dialogue Gatherings” emphasized that in order to live in a more peaceful environment in a diverse community, we need to understand cultures and traditions from their real sources, and if possible from their representatives through dialogue.

On Wednesday January 20, 2010, three members of the training team and I attended a luncheon sponsored by the Interfaith Dialogue Center in Newark New Jersey. (See Appendix C-198) There was a video of the Muslim life in Turkey and a Christian

guest lecture from Seton Hall University.(See Appendix C-201-202) There was a period of questions and answers immediately following the speech of approximately 25 minutes.

Conclusion:

As a result of the September 14, Muslim Ramadan Turkish dinner and dialogue, the January 20, Interfaith Dialogue Center luncheon and dialogue, I have concluded that the youth of St. Johns and the training team consciousness was elevated to a higher level. I have also concluded that they became more aware of the need to prepare high school students to be educated in a multifaith world based on the dialogue and interaction with other faiths.

Strategy 4.

I visited four different faith communities to interact and dialogue with its members. The primary subjects focused on were quality of life for parishioners and youth initiatives.

Results:

At the invitation of Rabbi Yackov Saacks I had the honor of attending a 7am. Worship Service at the Chai Center in Dix Hills, New York. Immediately after this powerful service led by Rabbi Saacks all present (approximately 25 men) adjoined to the dining area to break bread and dialogue.

Approximately 20 percent of the adult membership and 50 percent of the high school students of St. Johns accompanied me in visiting and engaging in dialogue and worship with Rabbi Art Vernon and the members of the West Hempstead, New York Jewish Center. (See Appendix C-183-184)

I was accompanied by three members of the training team and seven members of the high school focus group as I visited and engaged in dialogue with President Sadri Altinok and the members of the Long Island Muslim Turkish Culture Center. (See Appendix C-159-164)

Three members of the training team accompanied me on a visit to the Interfaith Dialogue Center in Newark New Jersey where we viewed a Muslim video, and engaged in dialogue with President Dr. Levent Koc, members of IDC and other visiting faith community guest. (See Appendix A-132-133 and C-198)

Conclusion:

I am convinced that because of the concerted efforts of all the participants of St. Johns which included the site team members, training team members and focus group, the team was better prepared, and did serve to assist me to prepare the high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. I have also concluded that the high school students and congregation have a better understanding of the need to prepare our high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. All of the participating faith communities recognize the need to work together to improve the quality of life for all.

Strategy 5.

The training team recorded their learning and reflections throughout this project.

Results:

This data was used as information and guides as this project developed its identity. I was informed by the training team that they recorded and took pictures as we moved forward.

Conclusion:

I concluded that the training team was passionate about their task of assisting me in this project to prepare St. Johns Baptist Church high school students to be educated in a multifaith world. I have also concluded by their unselfish commitment of time to travel and engage in dialogue with other faith communities that the team members did enlarge their horizon regarding their neighbors.

The third goal was to prepare 10 high school students from St. Johns Baptist Church to interact and dialogue with students of other faith communities at institution of higher learning.

Strategy: 1.

High school students at St. Johns will explore their relationship with Christ at weekly meeting with me in March and April.

Results:

At the first meeting I gave out 12 questionnaires to the high school students present. I assigned seats and assured them of confidentiality; the questionnaire contained 8 multi choice questions and 3 true and false questions. (See Appendix B-135) The Following week I issued a questionnaire regarding their church affiliation and their knowledge and interaction with people from other faiths. See Appendix B-138)

Conclusion:

Based on the general average of 70 for basic questions about God, I assigned the students to read the first three chapters of the gospel of John. We discussed the chapters one the second week. The students have been consistent in their attendance at bible study

and worship service. I further concluded that there was a need to continue to prepare the students to be educated in this multifaith world.(See Appendix B-138)

Strategy: 2.

I conducted a Bible study with all high school students at St. Johns Baptist Church.

Results:

The students met on Wednesdays from 7:30PM. To 9PM. I met with them the first 30 minutes for weekly Bible study. The remaining of the time they met with Evangelist Shelia Thomas a member of the training team.

Conclusion:

I believe that the Bible study gave the high school students a stronger foundation in Christian doctrine which is paramount to engage in dialogue with youth from different faiths. I concluded that a stronger biblical foundation would make them better prepared to be educated in a multifaith world.

Strategy 3:

St. Johns youth was scheduled to attend a youth retreat in May 2009 with emphasis on respecting and appreciating the persons of other faiths.

Results:

For a number of reasons the volatile economy included, the youth of St. Johns did not go away to a retreat as planned in May 2009. We were able however to have an in-house session with youth which culminated with a night of elegance, Friday May 29, 2009.

Conclusion:

I expressed my appreciation to the training team for their resilience in conducting a retreat at St. Johns, which ended with a night of elegance. The youth had fun and developed a greater appreciation for Christianity and other faith communities. Although this in-house retreat was successful, retreating to an isolated area with limited distraction would always enhance the youth Christian education. I have concluded that the church body should work toward removing obstacles that would prevent the youth from going on retreats. I have also concluded that the youth are less intimidated by members of other faiths. .

Strategy 4.

The youth of St. Johns will interact with members of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning and Houses of Worship.

Results:

Three members of the training team and 8 members of the focus group went on a HBC college tour with Eastern Baptist Association in July 2009. I met them in Atlanta Georgia. Primarily because of the time of year, there was limited interaction with members of other faith communities. The training team and the focus group have previously interacted in worship on four occasions.

Conclusion:

I have concluded that the focus group at St. Johns is better prepared to be educated in a multifaith world. We have developed a model from this project to be instituted into the Christian education ministry of St. Johns Baptist Church. We will continue to expose the membership to other faith communities in bible study and

multifaith worship services. I have also concluded that the Christian community should embrace multifaith dialogue with a common thread of improving the quality of life for all the people. The Christian community should encourage their youth to go on college tours and if there is a need where possible we should financially assist the youth to attend.

CHAPTER 9: MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

SITE TEAM

The members of the Site Team dedicated substantial time and effort in joining me, in the process of a competency assessment. The Site Team members involved are Dr. T. Monroe Turner – Pastor, Entrepreneur, Retired Adjunct College Professor, Assistant School Superintendent, School Principal, West Hempstead, NY, Dr. Ira Gerald – Author, College Professor, T.V. Host, Former School Administrator Hempstead, NY., Dr. Kelvin D. Redmond Sr. – Author, Entrepreneur, Associate Minister Shiloh Baptist Church of Rockville Centre NY., Freeport, NY., Mr. Michael Alexander - Engineer, Lakeview Library President, West Hempstead, NY, Mrs. Renner Reed – Former President Lakeview NAACP, Political Activist, West Hempstead, NY, Mrs. Phyllis Wright – Retired Principal, Former School Board President, West Hempstead, NY., Ms. Christina Nichols – Graduate School, Hospital Administrative Assistant, Rockville Centre, NY., Ms. Jeaneice Edwards – Retired Para-Legal, Hempstead, NY., Ad Hoc Site Team members were Dr. Beresford Adams, Coram, NY, Dr. Patricia Rickenbacker, Massapequa, NY., Rabbi Yackov Saacks, Huntington, NY., Dr. Curtis Whitney, Brooklyn, NY.

Competency Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Evaluation Process

At the January 13, 2009, meeting the two competencies, the Site Team and I identified for development from the Seminary's assessment of Candidate Competencies were (1) Ability to engage productively in dialogue and (2) Administrator:

Ability to Engage Productively In Dialogue

Goal:

I planned to improve my ability to engage productive in dialogue by meeting and engaging in dialogue with members of different faith communities during the duration of this project.

Strategies: 1.

I engaged in monthly dialogue with people from different faith communities.

Strategy: 2

I became a member of the multifaith Ministerial Alliance of West Hempstead.

Strategy: 3

I attended the Interfaith Dialogue Center in Newark, New Jersey.

Evaluation process:

I had Dr. T. Monroe Turner, a member of the site team to evaluate my growth in this area.(See Appendix A-128)

Administrator:

Goal:

Engage an initiative that will improve my administrative skills to, define and analyze task and problems in St. Johns Baptist Church and establish concrete and realistic

goals. Finally I will effectively participate in a multifaith initiative to understand and promote group dynamics.

Strategy 1:

I will create a bi-weekly administrative panel to discuss goals and objectives.

Strategy 2:

I will train and empower the ministers of SJBC to be assigned to sub-groups.

Strategy 3:

I will request permission to observe the efficiency of local pastors.

Strategy 4:

I will become an active member of a multifaith alliance.

Evaluation Process:

I will solicit written feedback from a member of the team to determine clarity of the goals and objectives from all participants at SJBC. I will request written feedback from an observed pastor.

Ministerial Competencies Evaluation

Ability to Engage Productively In Dialogue

Ministerial Alliance

In striving to improve my ability to engage in productive dialogue with members of other faith communities, I have become an active member of the West Hempstead

Ministerial Alliance.(See Appendix C192-193) The West Hempstead Ministerial

Alliance presently is a multifaith group with a membership that includes the following:

Rabbi Art Vernon – Jewish
Reverend /Dr. Thomas Turner – Christian
Reverend Frederick L. McElderry – Christian
Reverend Frank Maniscalco – Christian
Reverend Raymond Lorthioir – Christian

Vicar Rebecca Pollicino – Christian
Richard Hart – Buddhist
Tony Esposito- Buddhist

The common thread in the West Hempstead Ministerial Alliance is “to enhance the quality of life for all residents of West Hempstead”. Rabbi Art Vernon has become the unofficial convener of the group. I became an active member of the alliance in March of 2009. The group met once a month at a predetermined place of worship. The meetings are held in church basements, Rabbi’s office or community center, with 2 Buddhists, 5 Christians and 1 Jew often in attendance. There have been refreshments available at each meeting. I was honored to host a meeting in St. Johns Baptist Church lower sanctuary. At this juncture there was no fixed date or location assigned. Prior to the conclusion of each meeting the date and location for the next meeting is agreed on. The general meeting time has remained to be 10 AM. Thursday has been the primary agreed day to meet.

As we engage in dialogue there is a sense of mutual respect for all participating faith communities. Theological differences are shared for informational purposes only. The agenda items vary from month to month. The agenda topics have included however the school district, housing, an undesirable hotel, ecumenical worship and youth initiatives. Kate McCarthy would describe this face-to-face encounter to negotiate issues of mutual concerns as the real deal.⁵⁵

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

August 9, 2009, 4:00PM. The West Hempstead Ministerial Alliance joined the St. Johns Baptist Church in their first multifaith worship service.(See Appendix C-165-168) Worship according to Dr. Kelvin Edmond is the corporate celebration of what God has

⁵⁵ Kate McCarthy, *Interfaith Encounter in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

done through Jesus Christ and his continuing presence through the work and power of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ As a Baptist preacher, I not only affirm Dr. Redmond definition of worship, but the members are taught to demonstrate God's presence and power in their worship. Even though the invited guest preacher was a Rabbi a Baptist praise and worship service began at 4PM. Pastors Frederick McElderry, Frank Maniscako, Raymond Lorthioir, Monroe T. Turner Art Vernon and Vicar Rebecca Pollicino met me in my office for pre-service information and prayer. I gave brief instructions regarding assignments, seating and the offering prior to the prayer. After prayer we proceeded to the pulpit. At 4:15 the praise and worship team turned the service over to me to preside for the evening. Pastor McElderry of St. Andrew's Lutheran blessed us with the invitational prayer; Pastor Maniscako read the Old Testament scripture and Pastor Raymond Lorthioir of Trinity Lutheran read the New Testament scripture. The congregational Hymn "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" was sung under the direction of Evangelist Christiana Nichols, accompanied by musicians Minister Timothy Flythe, Enoch Thomas and Shawn Black. Reverend Hazel Thomas welcomed all to St. Johns Baptist Church and Vicar Rebecca Pollicino responded. After the response there was a short musical greeting period in which the entire church participated.

As service resumed Pastor T. Monroe Turner articulated the purpose. A musical praise dance was performed under the direction of Evangelist Shelia Thomas. I made an appeal to the congregation for a scholarship offering; most, if not all, responded in kind. After the offering St. Johns Baptist choir directed by Evangelist Nichols was electrifying with a spirited selection. Pastor Turner presented to some and introduced to others Rabbi

⁵⁶ Kelvin D. Redmond, "Reaching African American Males Ages 16-24" (D. Min diss., New York Theological Seminary, 2009), 134.

Art Vernon of the Jewish Community Center as the preacher of the hour. After his salutation Rabbi Vernon preached a powerful message that challenged all present. (See Appendix A-116 and C-165) The Jewish Community Center choir selection was song in Hebrew and English after the sermon. (See Appendix C-166) The focus group of St. Johns was present and did participate in the service. (See Appendix C-167-168) The diverse faith communities adjourned to the lower sanctuary for fellowship after the benediction by Vicar Rebecca Pollicino. In the fellowship area we engaged in informal dialogue as we ate a light meal prepared by the members of St. Johns.

On January 10, 2010, 3PM. the second ecumenical service was held at the Jewish Community Center. Once again, all faith communities participated in the service. Rabbi Art Vernon conducted the service and I was the guest preacher for the day. My sermon topic was “Go Forward”. (See Appendix A-121) Rabbi Art Vernon did several prayers in Hebrew and English. The choir from St. Johns was awesome in singing the sermonic selection prior to the sermon. Rabbi Vernon gave the benediction and invited the congregation to the dining area. In the dining room the interfaith congregation interacted and engaged in informal dialogue.

On three separate occasions I have had the privilege to engage in meaningful dialogue with Rabbi Yackov Saacks at the Dix Hills Chai Center in Dix Hills, New York.

On January 20, 2010 three member of the training team traveled with me to Interfaith Dialogue Center in Newark New Jersey where we interacted and engaged in dialogue.

I have had the opportunity to engage in dialogue by land line on two separate occasions with Ms. Louise Sheehy, the director and founder of the Multifaith Education

Project. In a September correspondence Ms. Sheehy sent me a copy of a multifaith cook book by The Olive Tree Foundation for Peace a branch of the Multifaith Education project. This book resulted in the collaborating efforts of a multifaith group in action.

Evaluation Process:

I am convinced that my horizon was broadened because of the information shared by participants of other faith communities. I have concluded that my appreciation and respect for my community, the Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist communities have all improved. I will continue to interact and engage in meaningful dialogue with members of other faiths.

Administrator:

I have instructed the ordained minister and the 6 licensures on the future direction of the church. I explained to the licensures ministers their appointments would need ordination in the future. Rev. Hazel Thomas was appointed to the position of administer pastor of the church. All of the ministers were given an ordination booklet to begin preparing for ordination. The ministers will attend a minister class and give input as we move toward the ordination date to be assigned. All of the ministers were informed that the mission of this initiative was to become a viable team to grow the body of St. Johns Baptist Church to Christ Like maturity and enable them to partner in growing the church. As we sat in my office behind closed doors, each minister explained the mission to determine if they were clear on the goals and objectives.

I have observed pastors, Reverend William A. Watson, (See Appendix A-136) Reverend Phillip Elliott, Reverend Joe L. Brown and Bishop Frank White, all of whom have built and oversees multi-million dollar ministries. Thursday March 12, 7:30PM.

2009, as the guest preacher at St. Johns Baptist church of Westbury, New York, I observed Reverend William A. Watson administrative skills up close as he gave leadership to that ministry. He was very efficient in his organizational skills. Sunday, December 13, 2009 10 AM., as the guest preacher at Faith Baptist Cathedral in Hempstead, New York I observed Reverend Joe Louis Brown administrative skills up close as he gave leadership to that ministry. His directives were clear and concise as he provided leadership for the church.

Evaluation Process:

I learned to evaluate the present prior to moving and to make changes for improvement where necessary.

I learned to take time to understand the group processes and dynamics.

I have learned to be clear and concise in giving directives.

I have learned to be even more persistent in prayer, purpose, passion, patience, and to place profound trust in God when building or overseeing a ministry.

APPENDIX A
LESSON PLAN
SERMONS
LETTER

APPENDIX A

Lesson Plan

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Hour	Topic	Methodology/Procedure
1	Introduction – Creed	Student introduce themselves- Lecture on the Christian’s Beliefs with supporting Scriptures (all students are encouraged to participate)
2	Scriptures-God-Providence	Class participation regarding the Sufficiency, Certainty and Authority of Scripture; the Sovereign God and Grace
3	The Fall Of Humanity	Lecture on the meaning of the fall and the Sin Nature Of Mankind; Class participation regarding Consequences, Repentance, Faith and Salvation
4	Election-The Mediator	Lecture on Gods choice, action and will for all Humanity. Class participation regarding the Only Mediator between God and man
5	The Holy Spirit/G	Lecture and Class participation on the Person, Presence and mission of the Holy Spirit/Ghost
6.	Regeneration-Repentance	Lecture on New Birth and Resurrection, Class Participation
7	Faith	Class discussion regarding Faith and Application.
8	Justification and Adoption	Class discussion regarding contradiction or/and
		APPENDIX A
9	Sanctification	Inconsistency Class discussion and lecture regarding Process, Transformation and Application
10	The Perseverance of the Saints	Class discussion regarding the failure to Employ Grace, temptation and prevention
11	The Kingdom of God	Lecture regarding God the Creator and the Eternal purpose of God
12	The Church	Lecture and class discussion regarding the Physical and spiritual church

13	Baptism and The Lord's Supper	Class Participation
14	Review	Class Participation, Question and Answers

APPENDIX A

Sermons

By Rabbi Art Vernon

I WANT TO BEGIN BY THANKING MY FELLOW CLERGY OF THE WEST HEMPSTEAD CLERGY COUNCIL FOR BESTOWING UPON ME THE HONOR OF SPEAKING TO YOU THIS AFTERNOON. THE VERSES I HAVE CHOSEN TO SPEAK ABOUT WERE READ IN YESTERDAY IN SYNAGOGUES ALL OVER THE WORLD. WE JEWS HAVE A LECTIONARY THAT WAS ESTABLISHED ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO AND EVERY CONGREGATION READS THE SAME SECTION FROM THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES EACH WEEK. LET ME READ AGAIN, FROM DEUTERONOMY, CHAPTER 10, VERSES 12 AND 13. (READ THE VERSES)

AND NOW ISRAEL, MEANING THE JEWISH PEOPLE, WHAT DOES THE LORD YOUR GOD ASK OF YOU? - WHY DOES THE BIBLE SAY THIS? - WHO ELSE BUT THE LORD MIGHT BE ASKING ISREAL? ARE OTHER PEOPLE, OR PERHAPS SOME ISRAELITES WORSHIPPING GODS OTHER THAN THE LORD? THE BIBLE EMPHASIZES THAT THE DEMANDS WHICH FOLLOW ARE FROM THE LORD. THEY ARE DEMANDS, NOT SUGGESTIONS, NOT REQUESTS - DEMANDS. THE LORD EXPECTS THE ISRAELITES TO ACCEPT AND OBEY. THEY ARE NOT OPTIONAL. SO WHAT IS THE LORD EXPECTING? TO FEAR THE LORD YOUR GOD - DOES IS MEAN TO BE AFRAID OF GOD? NO, THIS IS NOT

THE FEAR THAT YOU FEEL FACING A RAGING TIGER OR SOME OTHER SCARY PHENOMENON. FEAR HERE MEANS RESPECT - TO TAKE GOD SERIOUSLY, TO TAKE GOD'S DEMANDS SERIOUSLY. THAT'S A TALL ORDER, ISN'T IT. IN OUR DAY, TODAY, PEOPLE OF FAITH GENERALLY ARE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY. WHEN WE PROCLAIM THAT OUR BELIEFS ARE GROUNDED IN THE BIBLE, IN GOD'S WORD OR WE ASSERT THAT OUR BELIEFS COME FROM GOD - OFTEN WE AND OUR BELIEFS ARE RIDICULED! NEVERTHELESS, GOD EXPECTS US TO TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY.

I'M GOING TO SKIP OVER THE NEXT FEW WORDS, BUT I WILL COME BACK TO THEM LATER

THEN, THE BIBLE SAYS - TO LOVE HIM AND TO WORSHIP OR SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD. TO LOVE GOD? LIKE WE LOVE OUR WIVES OR OUR CHILDREN? OF COURSE NOT. THE GREEKS HAD TWO WORDS FOR LOVE - EROS AND AGAPE. EROS IS THE SEXUAL LOVE THAT TWO PEOPLE FEEL FOR EACH OTHER. THAT IS NOT LOVE OF GOD. LOVE OF GOD IS AGAPE, WHICH MEANS CLOSENESS AND PROFOUND MUTUAL RESPECT AND TRUST. THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE GOD. GOD IS NOT HUMAN. GOD DOES NOT NEED OUR ADORATION. BUT, GOD WANTS OUR DEVOTION. THAT IS LOVE OF GOD. AND HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO SHOW OUR LOVE?

THE BIBLE CONTINUES - WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR LIFE. NOW WHEN THE BIBLE USES THE WORD HEART, WE THINK OF THE EMOTIONS. WE THINK ABOUT OUR FEELINGS. BUT, IN BIBLICAL HEBREW, THE HEART IS THE PLACE OF UNDERSTANDING. THE PSALMS SAY - GIVE AN UNDERSTANDING HEART. WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY MEANS IS GIVE AN UNDERSTANDING MIND. COMPREHENSION NOT EMOTION. GOD WANTS US TO SHOW OUR LOVE THROUGH OUR THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS. JUDAISM TEACHES THAT ALL OUR INTENTIONS SHOULD BE FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN - TO SHOW OUR DEVOTION TO GOD.

AND WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS WITH ALL YOUR LIFE - IT MEANS WITH TOTAL AND COMPLETE DEDICATION. NO HOLDING BACK. NO RESERVATIONS. EVERYTHING WE DO SHOULD, MUST REFLECT OUR LOVE AND DEVOTION TO GOD.

BACK TO THE WORDS I SKIPPED - TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS - TO WALK OR FOLLOW IN GOD'S WAY MEANS TO BEHAVE AS GOD WOULD BEHAVE IN A SITUATION. WE HAVE SEEN THE BUMPER STICKER - WWJD - WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? WELL THE BIBLE HERE IN DEUTERONOMY IS TEACHING TO ASK OURSELVES - WHAT WOULD GOD DO? THE PEOPLE OF GOD SHOULD BE WILLING TO FOLLOW GOD. THE QUESTION IS WHAT WOULD GOD DO? YOU SEE, WE ARE GOD'S PARTNERS, GOD'S CO-

WORKERS, IN MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. GOD EXPECTS US, NO GOD DEMANDS OF US THAT WE COMPLETE THE WORK OF CREATION WHICH HE BEGAN. GOD IS TEACHING US THAT TO BE FULLY HUMAN MEANS TO BE MORE GOD-LIKE.

THE NEXT VERSE EXPLAINS THIS IDEA. TO OBSERVE THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD, HIS STATUTES WHICH I (THAT'S MOSES) AM COMMANDING YOU TODAY FOR YOUR GOOD.

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, THE RULES WE ARE TO FOLLOW, ARE NOT FOR GOD'S BENEFIT, NO, THEY ARE FOR OUR BENEFIT, FOR OUR GOOD. HOW DO WE BENEFIT FROM OBSERVING THE RULES? WE BECOME PEOPLE OF GOD! WE BECOME PARTNERS WITH GOD IN MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR EVERYONE!

SO, WHAT DOES GOD WANT OF US? TO TAKE GOD SERIOUSLY. TO DEVOTE OUR MINDS AND OUR LIVES TO GOD'S SERVICE. AND TO FOLLOW THE RULES AND BECOME THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN SERVICE TO OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS.

LET ME CLOSE WITH A PASSAGE FROM PSALMS. WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO DO WHAT GOD ASKS OF US, THEN WHAT? IS THERE A REWARD? THE PSALMIST SAYS - OSEH ELEH LO YIMOT L'OLAM. WHOEVER DOES THESE THINGS, SHALL NEVER STUMBLE. WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO BECOME THE

PEOPLE OF GOD, GOD PROMISES THAT WE CANNOT BE STOPPED. WE CANNOT BE ENSNARED, DECEIVED, MISLED, OR SEDUCED AWAY FROM THE RIGHT PATH. OSEH ELEH, LO YIMOT L'OLAM. WHOEVER DOES THESE THINGS, SHALL NEVER STUMBLE.

WE PRAY O LORD OUR GOD, HELP TO US LOVE YOU MORE. HELP US TO FOLLOW YOUR RULES. HELP TO BECOME YOUR PEOPLE. HELP US TO COMPLETE YOUR WORK IN THIS WORLD. AND THEN, O LORD, WE PRAY THAT WE SHALL NEVER STUMBLE OR DEPART FROM YOURS WAYS FOREVER. AMEN.

Sermon

By Reverend William Earl Thomas

Salutation

I praise God for the opportunity to stand before all of you this evening as a prognosticator of God. I am truly humble by this worship experience. I publicly thank Rabbi Art Vernon and the members of Jewish Community Center for the invitation and this opportunity. I certainly give honor to all of my co—labors in this God ordained initiative. I give honor to all the ministers' wives particular my bride of 47 plus years the renowned Reverend Hazel Thomas. Give honor to the ministerial staff of St. Johns Baptist Church and all the members present.

“GO FORWARD”

Exodus 14:15 “And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward:

Introduction:

Obviously this is a very simple, yet I believe a sublime topic. Simple in the fact that “Go Forward” is just not a deep theological title; it may be perceived by the theologian that a sermon following this title will only promote a type of forward progress aliened with another “Name It and Claim It” (what ever it may be), message, without depth. The subliminal connotation become evident however when one consider the mitigating circumstances surrounding the forward progress. Please allow me to say to the New

Testament scholars, I am not oblivious of the challenges of applying what scholars and theologians believe to be 1491 B.C. dynamics to the 21 century Church. Please help me by “LOOKING AT YOUR NEIGHBOR AND TELL THEM, THE PREACHER IS GOING SOMEWHERE”.

BODY

I am convinced that this text is a type of faith community in action. Please note the text illuminate three Positions or views from people who were all in the same location. I am of the opinion, that one's location be it social political, physical, or spiritual should determine one's position. The Children of Israel had all been liberated by God from a powerful force. God used his servants Moses and Aaron to literally transform them from slavery to freedom. They were moved from a people of bondage to a people of prosperity; from a people of oppression to a people of passion and possession. When they left Egypt, God provided for them. They did not leave empty handed. As people of God we have come to expect nothing less from God. Where there is revelation vision there will be provision. May I remind you that “God” sent Moses to tell Pharaoh, let his people go. Too often people go without being sent. People have vision without revelation from God that has no provision. The church talk about a God that will supply all their needs and yet people in the church are hungry, destitute and broke. That is not of a God that illuminate the fact He has come that His people may have life and have it more abundantly. According to Third John 2nd verse God would that the people of God prosper, be healthy even as their souls prosper”. This text involving the people of Israel epitomized liberation theology in action. Israel had the honor of observing and being participants in the miraculous works of God. However as we closely view the text, there

is a question that demands our attention. Were they liberated or did they simply change their location? They were all in the same location and yet took the following 3 distinct different positions.

1. "Egypt"
 - a. We would be better off in Egypt
 - b. Let's go back to the old way
 - c. a people stuck in yesterday
 2. "Wilderness"
 - a. Keep on doing what you always did
 - b. If it's not broken why fix it
 - c. refused to go forward
- "FAITH"
 - a. If it's of God we can do it.

In this life regardless of your location if you are dealing with people you will hear those three positions. Two of which are counterproductive particularly if you are to go forward. The text said "The Lord" told Moses to tell the children of Israel to "Go Forward". If we allow the Egypt or Wilderness crowd to have their way where would we as people of God be today? Please consider the following three points as this body goes forward.

1. Proclamation
 - a. Authenticity: What is the root of the proclamation? Where did it come from? Who is the author? What is the accompanying direction or vision? The text said "God" told to tell the people to "Go Forward" .
2. Provision:
 - a . Until God's revelation Moses was oblivious of the fact he had the necessary tools

to move forward. Often time one cannot recognize the fact what is needed is in the mist. "God told Moses to Lift up the rod in his hand" The rod was there all the time.

3. Purpose :

a. Even when you confront impossible odds if God say go forward, then my brothers and sisters we need to: "Go Forward"

CONCLUSION

As a multifaith body we are faced with surmountable odds against forward progress. First there is that Egypt crowd. The traditionalist if you will. Come on you know the crowd you may even be one of them who say everything will be fine if we just go back the way it was. You are attempting to ask us to fix something that's not broken, If it's not broken why fix it; Why must we energy to move forward? We were doing fine over there. "What we need to do is simply go back to the way it use to be."

Secondly there is that Wilderness crowd. If you are one of those shame on you. You need a transformation of the mind. You do know the crowd doesn't you? They say why must we change? What's wrong with what we are doing? They don't realizing if you keep on doing what you always did you will keep on getting what you always got. You will continue to allow hotels occupied with undesirable which are detrimental to your neighborhood to grow.

Finally there is that faith crowd that we all should strive to be part of. They recognize that there is a God, a creator if you would who love us. A crowd that realize there is strength in unity. A crowd that can look beyond what is and understand regardless of our theological differences we have more in common than not.

We all want a quality education in a safe environment for our children.

We all need jobs of worth for ourselves and our children.

This group understands that no one wants to be unemployed and destitute.

We all want our property value to go up and not down.

The faith crowd agrees that nobody wants to live in a dilapidated house or communities.

We all want our taxes to go down not up.

We all want health and wealth, nobody wants to be, sick, broke and sad.

We all want peace, Joy and Happiness.

I tell you we have more in common than not so let's "Move Forward" Hand in Hand pressing our way beyond the negative odds against this initiative. There is a multifaith paradigm shift. Let us embrace it for if it is of God (I believe it is), it will stand.

"Go Forward"

Dear Pastor Thomas,

You asked the administrative team to write one or two paragraphs stating if we clearly understand the plans you have on moving the body of Christ forward. You stated the administrative team, you assembled was an important part of the church and their input is extremely valuable. You also emphasized that their input would be a part of the decision process as the church move forward. I believe I am speaking on behalf of the team when I say you have truly made us feel as if I input matters we are needed as you move the church in a the direction God would have you to go.

Thank you

Evangelist Catherine Whitted

Under the administration of Pastor William E. Thomas I am encouraged to give input regarding decisions for the church. Rev Thomas directives are clear and concise. He would not allow me or any member of the team to leave his presence if there was a lack of understanding. As administrators we believe our input is always considered to help edify and grow the church body.

- Evangelist Charlotte Seymour

APPENDIX A



St. Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
34 Rhodes Lane, West Hempstead, NY 11552
The Reverend Dr. T. Monroe Turner, Pastor

Charles Siebert, Chair
Mildred Seon
Board of Trustee

Venita Siebert
Preacher Steward

Church Secretary

718 – 527- 2710

Fax: 718 – 527-2773

February 10, 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

As Site Team Chair for the Reverend William E. Thomas, I submit the following brief of select interactions with both the team, and clergy from other denominations involved with his study.

Initially, Reverend Thomas was hesitant about accepting the opinions of the team, however, during the third meeting he reversed his posture to one of complete acceptance and due diligence to recommended tasks. This was evident in his effort to re-write several sections of the proposal, as well as being careful about how he verbally described his project.

During subsequent meetings with his team, Reverend Thomas gave strict attention to the guideline set forth by the University, while increasing his questions to team members, calling for their expertise on pertinent subjects pertaining to his study. He also did whatever was necessary to get needed information, evidenced by frequent telephone calls and e-mails to everyone; and long visits during regular working hours to the office of this Chairperson seeking advice and consent on his work.

During meetings with other Clergy, Reverend Thomas responded in a professional and receptive manner when offered their advice and opinions about his project. It was his idea to have the Rabbi of the West Hempstead Jewish Center come to St. Johns Baptist Church to bring a faith message, along with members of his congregation including the youth. This sharing of faith beliefs in a harmonious, positive way lead to a reciprocal service at the Synagogue where Reverend Thomas preached. Indeed, a momentous and historical event, and equally important, it provided fertile data for his study.

The pressure of performing on time has motivated Reverend Thomas to continue his work, but with serious attention to meeting deadlines. This personal action joined with a passion to complete, is evidence of his growth during this process.

Respectfully,

X

T. Monroe Turner
Pastor

As a site team member I would like to say that under the direction and leadership of Reverend William Thomas, Pastor of St. John's Baptist Church, I have learned how to become effective in ministry. Pastor Thomas speaks with lucidity and clarity and comprehension is uncomplicated and straightforward. He is able to offer superior advice with respect to bible based doctrine and promotes to line all things with the word of God. I was honored when asked to be a part of the site team. I enjoy working with Pastor Thomas as he engages in higher education.

He does not labor in vain but is humble in his ministry. Pastor Thomas has provided inspirational, eye-opening, thought- provoking, and mind-changing messages. His ministry is equally effective to both young and older Christians, as well as those who are not yet apart of the body of Christ.

He is a gifted and anointed communicator that shares, spreads, and preachers the word of God with integrity, biblical soundness, and stirs the heart of God's people to live holy in light of the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and brings sinners to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He's sober in his approach and very biblical in his exhortations and exposition. He often reminds those in his presence one can learn from anyone. As I have had the opportunity to meet with he and the site team I realize those were not idle words. We have progressed because he is receptive to the team input on this project.

Evangelist Christina Nichols

I, Deaconess Jeaneice Edwards, am a member of the Site Team for Rev. William Earl Thomas' project preparing high school students to be educated in a multi-faith world.

As a participant on this project, I was afforded the opportunity to interact with faiths other than my own Baptist faith community.

I attended two inter-faith services, one at St. John's Baptist Church and the second at the Jewish Community Center in West Hempstead, New York.

At both services I was able to observe the traditions and all of the faith communities working together for a common cause. The services were focused more on the commonalities than the differences.

It was indeed a positive and enlightening experience and I was able to share my thoughts with Pastor Thomas and I found him to be very receptive to my input. I believe the site team's commitment had a positive effect on the forward progress of the project.

Deaconess Jeaneice Edwards

Greetings,

My name is Sister Brenda Bright of St. John's Baptist Church in Lakeview. I have been working with pastor, William Earl Thomas in training the youth in a interfaith Dialogue. This program has been an eye opening and enjoyable experience for the youth as well as myself. The program was about the respect and mutual understanding of all faiths, cultivating friendships among other faiths and exploring new directions in relationship with religion. It consists of Christianity, Muslim, Buddhist and the Jewish faiths. The most enjoyable and memorable experience was having dinner in a Muslim household. I realized there wasn't much of a difference in the way we live and the food we eat. The only difference was we removed our shoes at the door and had dinner sitting on pillows around the table. We fellowshiped with the Jewish community, sang songs, heard a word from God and we all came to the same conclusion, no matter what language we speak or method of dialogue, we all serve the same God...one nation under God.

GOD BLESS!!

I had the pleasure of interacting with the interfaith culture. On September 13th. we visited Turkish Muslims in Long Island, where we experience Turkish Muslim food during Ramadan. We learned about the food, culture and their spiritual lives.

On January 20th. I had the privilege of visiting the Interfaith Dialog Center in Newark New Jersey.

The luncheon was host by John A Radano, Seton Hall University. He deliver a speech on New direction in relationship among Religions .

There I learned of the different faith.

This experience was very educational and informative. Now that I know more of the other faith. I would encourage others to attend dialog meetings. It is a great experience.

Sis. Coleen Jackson

Rev. William A. Watson, Jr.

As pastor of St. Johns Baptist Church in Westbury and Freewill Baptist Church in Freeport, past Moderator of Eastern Baptist Association of more than 150 churches, I was honored to permit Rev. William E. Thomas to shadow me in March and April of 2009. My six year tenure as Moderator of Eastern Baptist Association ended in July of 2009. My journey however began a long time ago with my two God fearing parents. They were very serious about their walk with God. They served God and taught their children by example. The benefits of family life help me to appreciate the teaching of my parents my many role models.

I have faced many challenges as moderator and pastor. Early in my administration, as moderator I was even faced with a serious health issue. God healed my body and gave me divine wisdom to deal with every challenge.

God inspired me to lead the congregation of St. Johns in Westbury, New York to build a church. We were compelled to trust God. The church had limited funds and was unable to secure a loan. We learned the sovereignty of God during those times. I cannot take the credit for all the blessings that life has afforded me. I give special thanks to the St. Johns Baptist Church of Westbury for their trust in me and support.

I believe the hope of every administrator is to take the organization higher. God has used me to move the ministry forward in all areas. My prayer is that Rev. Thomas was able to glean something as he showed me that will assist him in his endeavor.

Rev. William A. Watson, Jr.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE FORMS AND RESULTS

Questionnaire for Youth

Knowledge of God

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ANSWER THAT IS MOST CORRECT.

1. God is sovereign: A. Sunday only____. B. Weekdays only____ C. Saturdays only____.
D. Always____. E. Never____.
2. God is a: A. Human being____. B. Spirit____. C. Monk____. D. Alien____. E. It____.
3. Jesus is: A. The son of God____. B. The son of man____. C. God____. D. Savior____.
E. All of the above____.
4. God is the: A. Holy Spirit____. B. Jesus____. C. The Heavenly Father____.
D. All three____. E. None of these____.
5. The Father, Son: A. Are one____. B. Three Separate person____. And Holy Spirit:
C. Trinity____. D. Have separate office____.
E. All of the Above____
6. Christians are: A. Perfect____. B. Evil____. C. Abnormal____. D. Christ like____.
E. None of the above____.
7. God created: A. Most of the world _____. B. Only man and woman____.
C. All that is____. D. with Satan's help____.
E. Only the flying Birds____.

Please answer the following, True (T) or False (F)

Those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth: _____.

9. Without faith it is impossible please God_____.

10. Christians need to be Christ like not necessarily holy like some denominations, but true Christians_____.

Questionnaire

For Youth Attending Church

This questionnaire is being conducted by a doctoral student of New York Theological Seminary. The purpose of this research is to discover how traditional Christian churches prepare youth to dialogue and interact with youth of other faith communities.. Your time is greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept confidential.

CHURCH AND LOCATION:_____

1. As a Christian attending church, please rate the following responsibilities of a pastor on a scale 1-10 according to their importance to you. 10=most important 1=least important

Preaching _____ Teaching _____ Worship leader _____
Administrator _____ Community leader _____ Counselor _____
Spiritual leader _____ Theologian _____ Business Manager _____

2. Do you attend a church with:

Fewer than 150 member's _____ 150 to 399 members _____
400 to 699 member's _____ 700 to 1499 members _____
1500 or more member's _____

3. Does your church have any difficulty in recruiting and maintaining youth?

A lot of difficulty _____ some difficulty _____ A little difficulty _____ Don't know _____

- 3 a. What do you feel are the reasons why your church have difficulty in recruiting and maintaining youth (check all that apply)?

No programs of interest _____ irrelevant teaching _____ Attire/Dress Code _____
Length of Service (too long) _____ Sunday sports _____ Peer _____

Questionnaire For Youth

Pressure _____ Generational conflict _____ Adults dominate in the church

_____ Youth not used in service _____ Service is lifeless/boring _____

Don't know _____ other (explain) _____

4. Which programs in your church have been effective in reaching youth (Check all That applies)?

Youth Fellowship _____ Athletic programs _____ Mentoring _____

Christian dating and relationship _____ Music ministry _____

Education ministry _____ Job training programs _____ Outreach ministry

_____ Dance ministry _____ Media ministry _____ Other _____ Don't

Know _____

5. What is the church doing in terms of developing outreach programs for youth (Check all that apply)?

a. Evangelism:

Rallies _____ revivals _____ special services _____

b. Educational programs:

Bible study _____ Focus groups _____ Vacation Bible school _____

c. Social programs:

Fashion/talent shows _____ picnics _____ dinners _____ Dancing parties _____

d. Counseling by minister _____

e. Community service oriented programs:

Tutoring _____ visit hospitals/elders _____ Job training _____

f. Scholarship aid _____

g. Hiring of special youth and young adult minister _____

h. Other (explain) _____

i. Church does nothing for youth _____

On a scale of 1-14 why do youth leave the church? 1=the main reason 14=lesser of a reason

Irrelevant teachings _____ Lost interest in the church _____ Was not saved _____

No program of interest _____ Conflict with leadership _____ College _____
 Sports _____ Lifeless/boring services _____ Job/Work responsibilities _____
 Involvement in gangs _____ Family responsibilities _____ No meaningful role _____
 Troubled with the law _____ Generational Conflict _____

7. For each of the following, please tell me as a youth attending a Christian church what is very important, somewhat important, or not important about a church you will consider attending?

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
a. A tithing church	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Interfaith teaching	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Separate classes for Girls and boys	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. More sports activities	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Youth preacher's	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Youth in leadership	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Easy access to the pastor	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. A mentorship ministry	_____	_____	_____	_____
i. Job/Survival skill training	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Community outreach	_____	_____	_____	_____
k. Young adult ministries	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. Do you live in the community where you attend church?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't know _____

8b. How far do you travel from home to reach your church?

Walking distance _____ Less than 1 mile _____ 1-5 miles _____

6-10 miles _____ More than 10 miles _____

1. What is your marital status?

Never been married _____ Married _____ Divorced _____

Separated _____ Widowed _____

2. If married, does your spouse attend the same church?

Yes _____ No _____ Not married _____

11. What is your age?

12-20 _____ 21-31 _____ 32-42 _____

43-53 _____ 54-64 _____ Over 65 _____

12. Do you have children?

Yes _____ No _____

13. Are you raising all of your children?

Yes _____ No _____

14a. If yes, how many children do you have?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 or more _____

14b. (Fill in the blank). How many sons? _____ How many daughters? _____

15. What are the ages of your children?

Under 16 _____ 16-24 _____ 25-35 _____ Over 35 _____

16. (Fill in the blank). How many of your children currently live with you?

17. Do you attend church with your children ?

Every Sunday _____ some services _____

Only holiday's _____ only unavoidable weddings and funerals _____

18. Do you support interfaith ministry?

In my church _____

Another church _____

Questions about your life:

19. Growing up, did you live with both parents, with your mother only, with your father only, or with someone else?

Both parents _____ Mother only _____ Father only _____

Grandparents or other relative _____ Mother and stepfather _____

Father and stepmother _____ Adopted parents _____

Someone else _____

20. Did you grow up in the South, Northeast, Midwest, West, or some where else?

The South _____ The Northeast _____ The North-central _____

The Midwest _____ The West _____ Somewhere else _____

21. What is your highest education achievement?

Grade school _____ High School _____ College Graduate _____

Graduate School _____.

22. Do you think Interfaith have improved the quality of life for Christians today,

Are life has remained about the same compared to twenty years ago?

Getting better _____ Getting worse _____ About the same _____

Don't know _____

23. Considering everything, do you think it is a (good time) or a (bad time) to teach youth of Christian faith how to dialogue and interact with youth of other faith communities?

Good time _____ Bad time _____ Neither _____ Don't know _____

24. Do you think Christian youth generally put (too much) emphasis, or (too little)

Emphasis on the following?

	<u>Too much</u>	<u>Too Little</u>	<u>About Right</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
a. Education	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Sports	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Their family's	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Their health	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Getting ahead at work	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Sex	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Image (being tough)	_____	_____	_____	_____

25. Do you feel Christian youth encounter (more obstacles) or (fewer obstacles) attempting to dialogue or interact with youth of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

	<u>More</u> _____	<u>Fewer</u>	<u>The same</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
a. Jews	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Muslims	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Sikh	_____	_____	_____	_____

26. For each of the following, please tell me whether you think it is a major concern with the youth of any particular faith community ?

	<u>Christian Concern</u>	<u>Jewish Concern</u>	<u>Muslim Concern</u>	<u>Sikh Concern</u>
a. HIV/AIDS	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Becoming involved in crime	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Racial discrimination	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Poverty	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Being unemployed	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Drugs and alcohol	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Not being responsible fathers	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Young men not taken their education seriously enough	_____	_____	_____	_____

i. Lack of character _____

27. If you had to pick one, which of these would you say is the single biggest problem facing all faith communities today?

a. HIV/AIDS _____

b. Becoming involved in crime _____

c. Racial discrimination _____

d. Poverty _____

e. Being unemployed _____

f. Drugs and alcohol _____

g. Not being responsible fathers _____

h. Young men not taken their education seriously enough _____

i. Lack of character _____

28. Do you think faith communities share similar concerns regarding quality of life for the youth of their respective communities?

Most definitely _____ Possible _____ nothing to compare _____

29. Do you think America's economic system present an interesting form for interfaith dialogue?

For Christians _____ For Jews _____ For Muslims _____ For Sikhs _____ For all faith communities

30. Do you believe youth of all faith communities are equally prepared to dialogue and interact with members of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

Most Definitely Possible Need improvement Unknown

a. Christians are more prepared _____

b. Jews are more prepared _____

c. Muslim are more prepared _____

d. Sikhs are more prepared _____

31a. Do you think most Christian youth do or do not show proper respect for their Christian Ethics?

Do show proper respect _____ Do not show proper respect _____

Don't know _____

31b. Is this a serious problem?

A serious problem _____ somewhat serious problem _____

Not too serious a problem _____ not a serious problem at all _____

32. As you may know, African-American Christian youth have a higher chance than most of attending prestigious Historical Black Colleges. For each, tell me whether you think it is a big reason, a small reason, or not a reason why this is true:

	<u>Big Reason</u>	<u>Small Reason</u>	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
a. Intimidated by youth members of other faith communities	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Poor Christian foundation	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Not prepared to dialogue with members of other faith communities	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. African-American youth have poor social skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Many black parents, schools and churches are not preparing their youth for life beyond high school	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. African-American Christian youth have limited support	_____	_____	_____	_____

33. Is race a contributing factor to interfaith dialogue and interaction for Christian youth at institutions of higher learning in America?

Yes _____ No _____ don't know _____

34. What is strongly influencing our Christian youth and having a (more) or (a lesser) impact on them?

	<u>Strongly Influence</u>	<u>Little Influence</u>	<u>No Influence</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
a. The home	_____	_____	_____	_____

b. The schools	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. The church	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. The message in music (Rap)	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. The media and entertainment	_____	_____	_____	_____
f. Sports	_____	_____	_____	_____
g. Financial success	_____	_____	_____	_____
h. Crime	_____	_____	_____	_____
i..Peers	_____	_____	_____	_____
j. Gangs	_____	_____	_____	_____

35. Here are explanations some people give why fewer and fewer Christian youth ----
-are not presently attending institutions of higher learning. . For each, tell me if you think
it is a big reason, a small reason, or not a reason, why Christian youth enrolment in
institutions of higher learning is declining.

	Big Reason	Small Reason	Not a Reason	Don't Know
Many Christian youth don't				
believe they can afford to go				
beyond high school	_____	_____	_____	_____
Many Christian youth are less				
likely to value college	_____	_____	_____	_____
Many Christian youth are from				
families which are reluctant to				
promote institutions of higher				
learning	_____	_____	_____	_____
Too many high schools are				
Not exposing Christian youth				
To the vast opportunities and				
viabilities of institutions of higher				
learning	_____	_____	_____	_____

YOUTH ATTENDING CHURCH
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
St. Johns Baptist Church Focus Group

For each of the following, as a youth attending a Christian church what is?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
L. A tithing church	9-60%	3-20%	1-7%	2-14%
M. Interfaith teaching	5-34%	6-40%	2-14%	2-14%
N. Separate glasses for Boys and girls		1-7%	9-60%	5-34%
O. More sports activities	4-27%	5-34%	6-40%	
P. Youth preachers	3-20%	8-54%	2-14%	2-14%
Q. Easy access to pastor	8-54%	4-27%	2-14%	1-7%
R. A mentorship ministry	7-47%	4-27%	2-14%	1-7%
S. Job/Survival skill training	7-47%	2-14%	2-14%	4-27%
T. Community outreach	11-74%	2-14%		2-14%
U. Young adult ministries	10-67%	2-14%		3-20%
V. Youth in leadership	5-34%	6-40%	2-14%	2-14%

Do you support interfaith ministry?

- C. In my church 10-67%
- D. In another church 5-34%

Do you think Interfaith have improved the quality of life for Christians today, are has life remained the same compared to twenty years ago?

- E. Getting better 10-67%
- F. Getting worse
- G. About the same
- H. Don't know 5-34%

B

Considering everything, do you think it is a good time or a bad time to teach youth of the Christian faith how to dialogue and interact with youth of other faith communities?

- E. Good time 12-80%
- F. Bad time

G. Neither

H. Don't know 3-20%

Do you think Christian youth generally put too much or too little emphasis on the following:

	Too much	Too little	About right	Don't know
H. Education		4-27%	9-60%	2-14%
I. Sports	3-20%	1-7%	7-47%	4-27%
J. Their families		2-14%	11-74%	2-14%
K. Their health		5-34%	7-47%	2-14%
L. Getting ahead at work		6-40%	5-35%	2-14%
M. Sex	2-14%	2-14%	7-47%	3-20%
N. Image (being tough)	1-7%	1-7%	8-54%	4-27%

Do you feel Christian youth encounter more or less obstacles or fewer obstacles? attempting to dialogue with youth of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

	More	Fewer	The Same	Don't Know
D. Jews	3-20%	2-14%	3-20%	7-47%
E. Muslims	4-27%	3-20%	1-7%	7-47%
F. Sikh	3-20%	3-20%	1-7%	8-54%

For each of the following, which ones are major concerns for the youth of any particular faith community?

	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh
j. HIV/Aids	10-67%	2-14%	2-14%	1-7%
k. Becoming involved in crime	10-67%	1-7%	4-27%	
l. Racial Discrimination	9-60%	3-20%	3-20%	

m. Poverty	7-47%	3-20%	5-34%	
n. Being Unemployed	9-60%	2-14%	3-20%	
o. Drugs and Alcohol	12-80%		2-20%	
p. Not being a responsible parent	9-60%	1-7%	4-27%	
q. Not serious about education	7-47%	2-14%	1-7%	2-14%
r. Lack of character	8-54%	3-20%	3-27%	1-7%

Do you think faith communities share similar concerns regarding quality of life for the youth of their respective communities?

Most Definitely	Possible	Nothing to compare
6-40%	8-54%	1-7%

Do you think America's economic system presents an interesting form for interfaith dialogue?

Christians	Jews	Muslims	Sikh	All faith communities
3-20%	2-14%	1-7%	4-27%	5-34%

Do you believe youth of all faith communities are equally prepared to dialogue and interact with members of other faith communities at institutions of higher learning?

		Most Definitely	Possible	Need Improvement	Unknown
e.	Christians more prepared	9-60%	1-7%	1-7%	4-27%
f.	Jews more prepared	3-20%	3-20%		9-60%
g.	Muslims more prepared	3-20%	2-14%		10-67%
h.	Sikhs more prepared	1-7%	1-7%		13-87%

Do you think most Christian youth do or do not show proper respect for their Christian Ethics?

Do show proper respect		Do not show proper respect		Don't know	
5-34%		13-87%		2-14%	
As you may know African-American youth have a higher chance than most of attending prestigious Historical Black Colleges. For each, tell me weather you think it is a big reason, a small reason, or not a reason why this is true?					
	Big Reason	Small Reason	Not a Reason	Don't Know	
Intimidated by youth of other faiths	5-34%	2-14%	2-14%	6-40%	
f. Poor Christian foundation	7-47%	2-14%	1-7%	5-34%	
g. Not prepared to dialogue	5-34%	3-20%	2-14%	5-34%	
h. Poor social skills	7-47%	1-7%	2-14%	5-34%	
i. Parents, Schools and Churches					
Are not preparing their youth					
For life beyond high school	7-47%	1-7%	1-7%	6-40%	
j. African-American youth have					
Limited support	8-54%	2-14%		5-34%	

What is influencing the Christian youth and having a more, or lesser impact on them?

		Strong Influence	Little Influence	No Influence	Don't Know
Race	10-67%			5-34%	
k.	The home	7-47%	5-34%	1-7%	2-14%
l.	The Church	12-80%	1-7%		2-14%
m.	Peers	6-40%	3-20%	2-14%	4-27%
n.	Gangs	5-34%	1-7%	3-20%	7-47%
o.	Crime	3-20%	5-34%	1-7%	6-40%
p.	Financial	5-34%	1-7%	5-34%	4-27%
q.	Sports	4-27%	6-40%	3-20%	2-14%
r.	The media and				

	entertainment	6-40%	3-20%	3-20%	3-20%
s.	The message in				
	music (Rap)	6-40%	3-20%	4-27%	2-14%
t.	The Schools	5-34%	7-47%	1-7%	2-14%

PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED IN A MULTIFAITH WORLD

This survey is being conducted by a doctoral student of New York Theological Seminary. The purpose of this research is to discover the importance of preparing high school students to interact and dialogue with students from different faith communities:

CIRCLE ONE

1. I am presently: Buddhists Christian Jew Muslim Sikh other
2. My faith worship on: Friday Saturday Sunday other_____
3. I attend Service: Once a Month Twice a Month Every worship day
4. I attend service because: Family tradition House hold rule enjoyment
peer pressure meet my friends teaching music
5. My age category is: 12-18 19-34 36-64 Over 65
6. My knowledge of other faith communities has improved because of: preaching
teaching youth forum peer sessions has not improved
7. Regarding other faith communities, The youth need: less preaching more
preaching less teaching more teaching other_____
8. AS a practicing _____,I interact with Buddhists Christians
9. Jews Muslims Sikh none of the above other_____
10. I respect members of other faith communities: definitely somewhat not sure
need more clarification
11. Dialoguing and interacting with members of other faith communities can:
Strengthen my beliefs weaken my beliefs Question my beliefs unsure
will not affect my belief

APPENDIX C
PICTURE













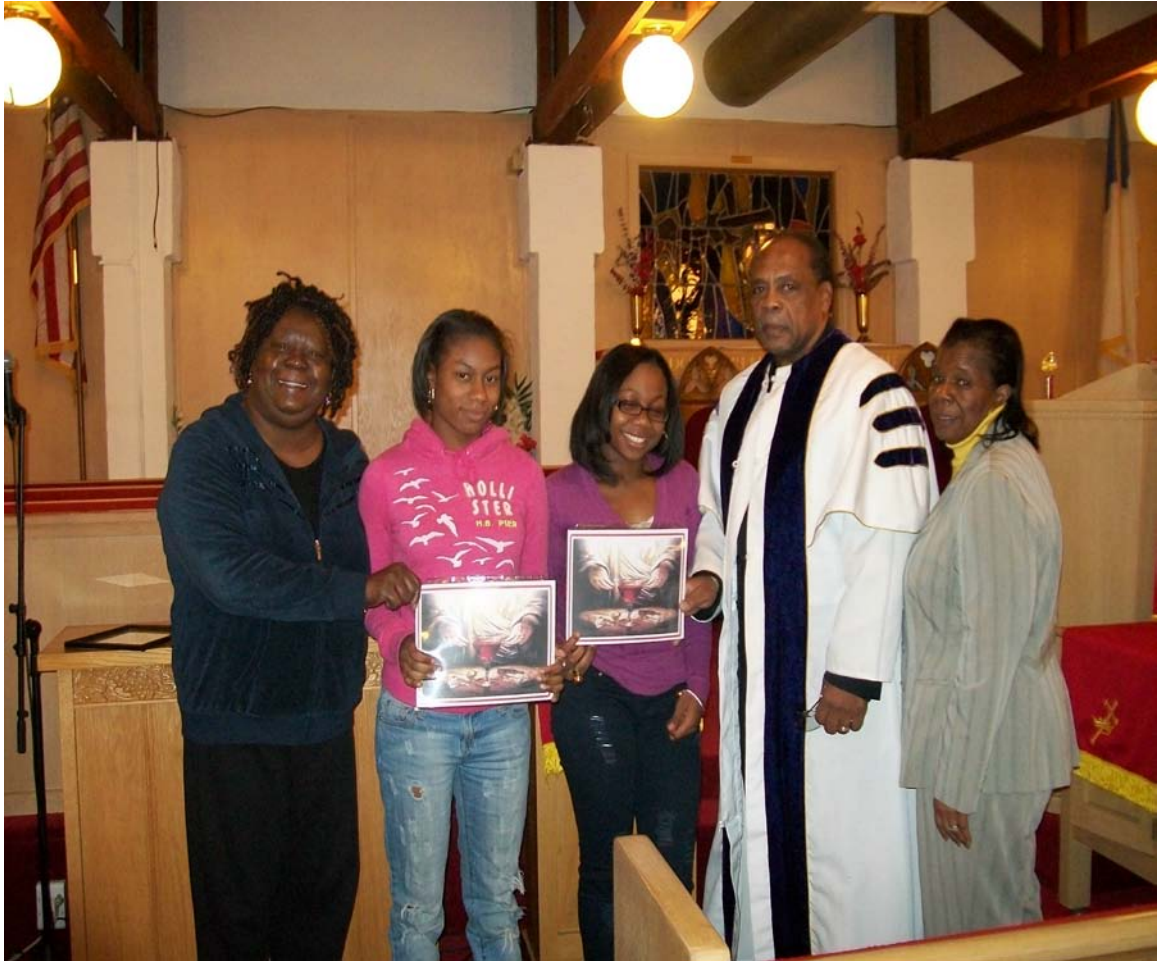




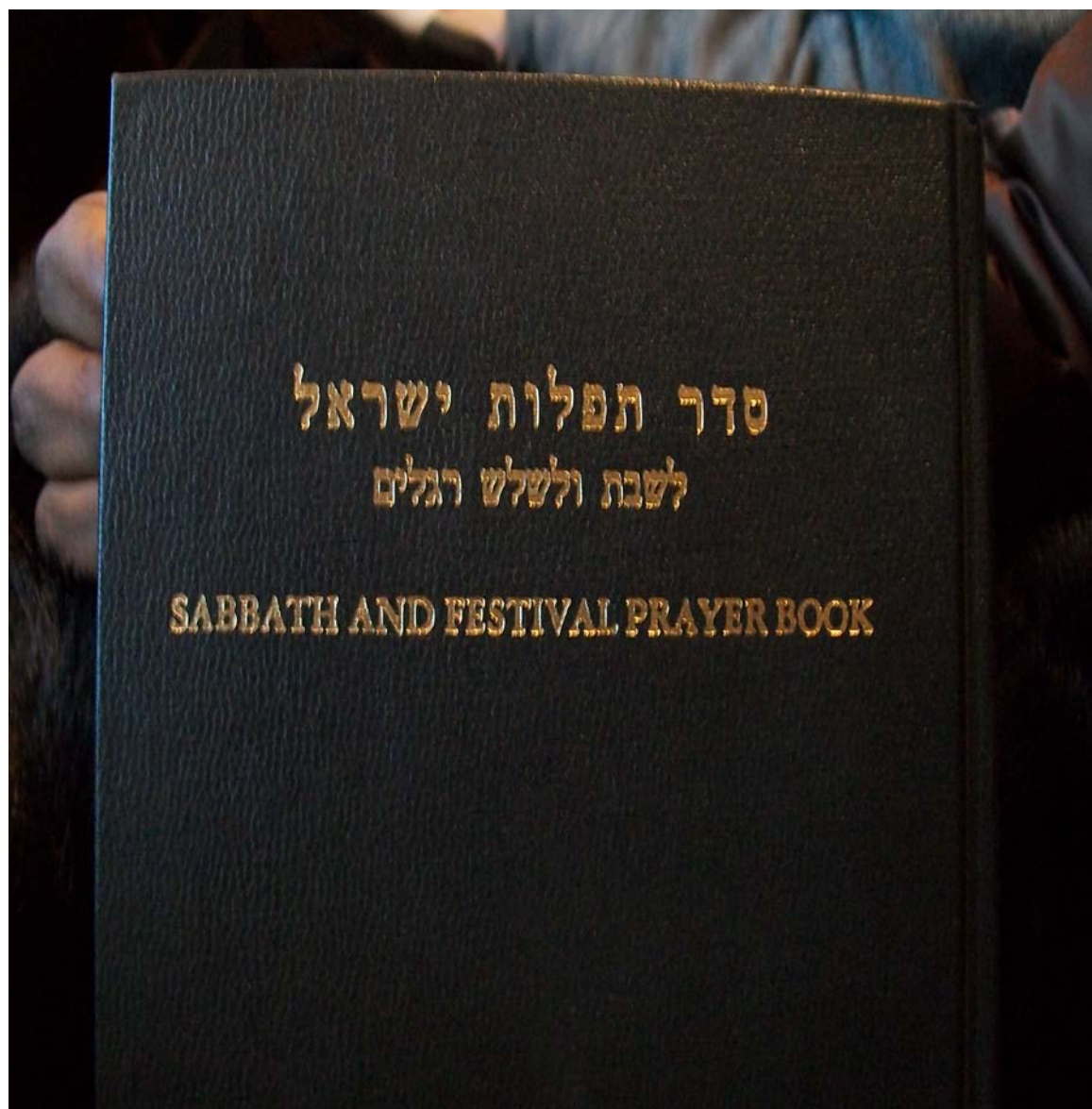










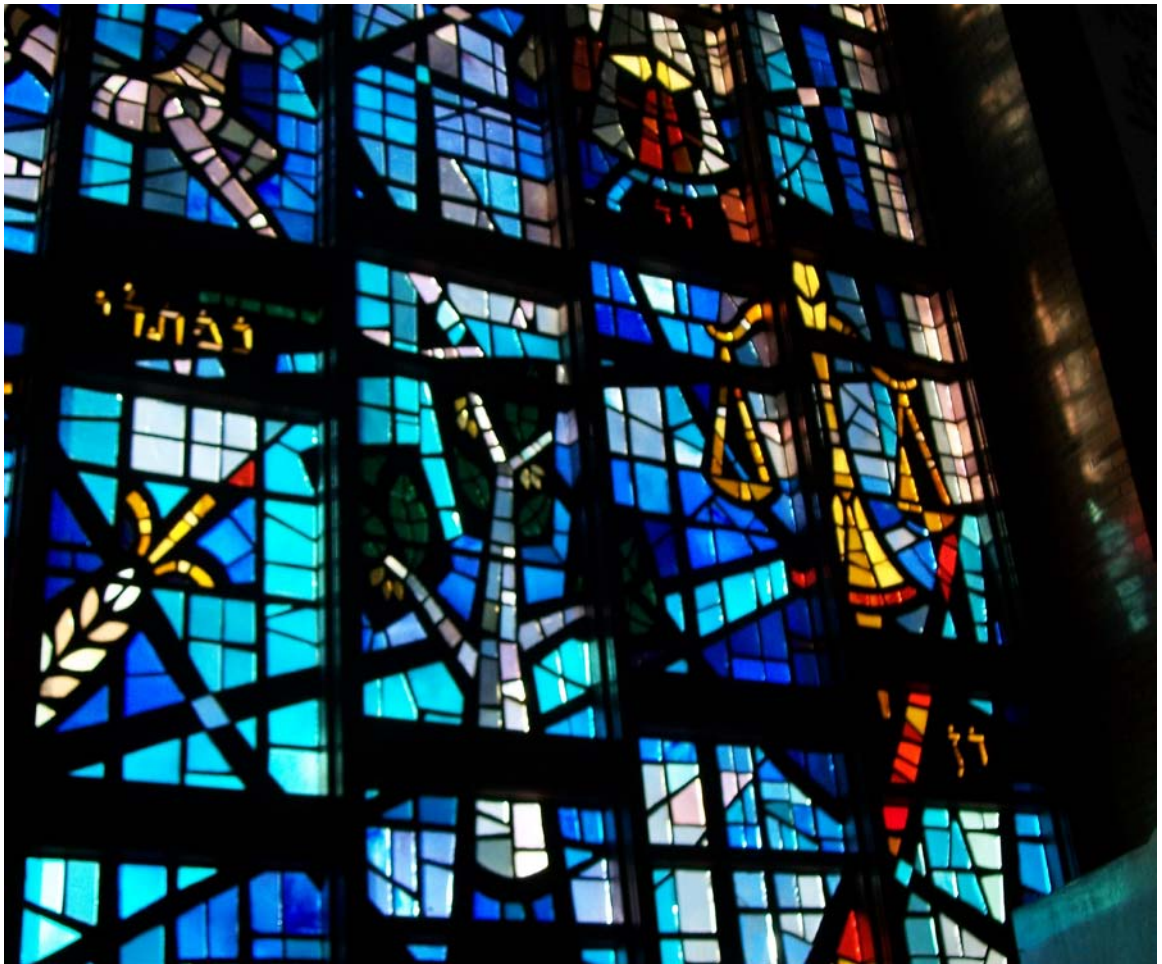








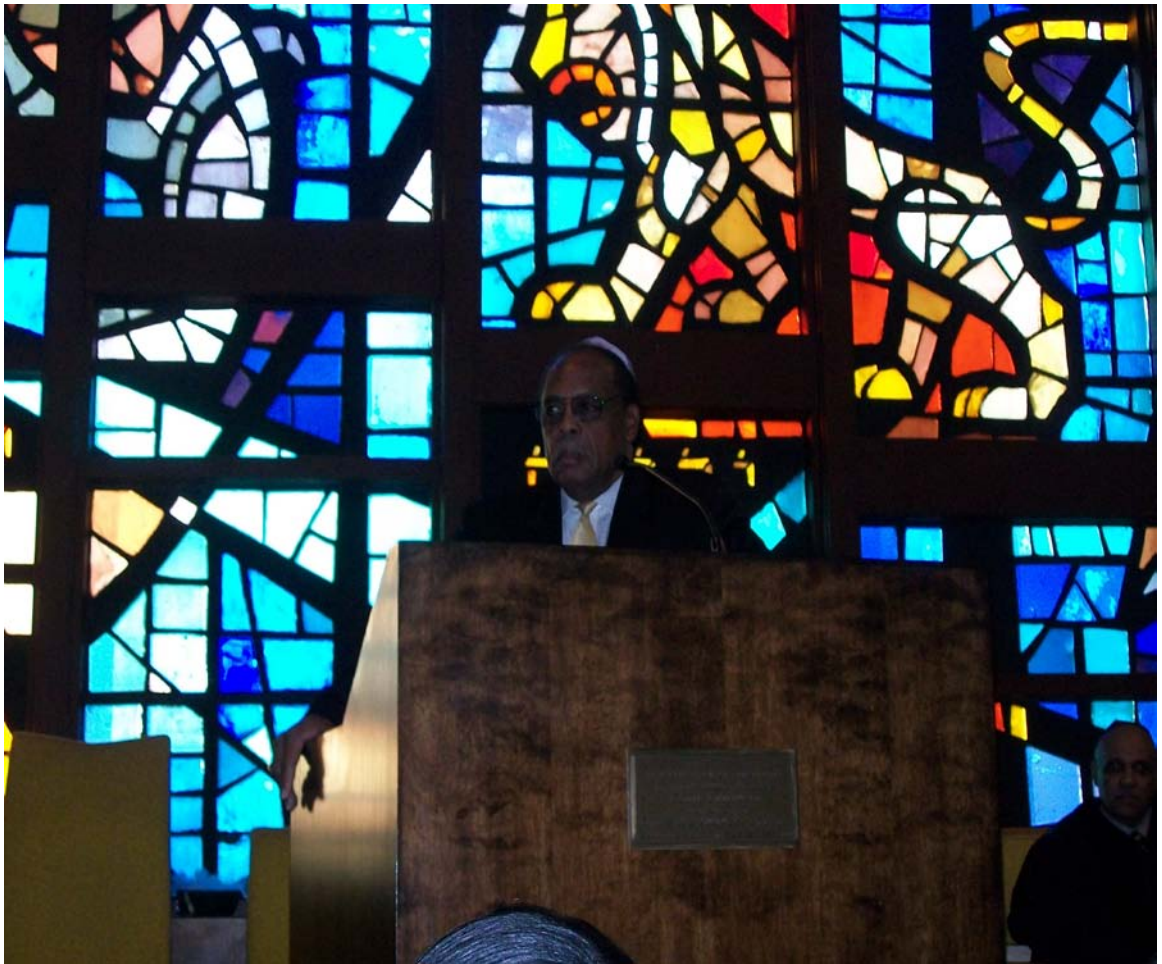




























































Rev. Thomas and Training Team at the Interfaith Dialogue Center In Newark New Jersey

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